

SC LTC Leadership Academy Pilot of a New Nursing Home High Value Business Model

A collaboration to strengthen front-line staff retention as the foundation for high performance.

Tip Sheet

HR Practices for Hiring Well and Keeping Good Staff

Taking time to hire right and supporting newly hired staff increases retention and stability.

WHY:

Caregiving is relationship based work. Nursing homes keep staff when they build relationships throughout the hiring and on-boarding process. Keeping newly hired staff helps retain long time staff, while instability among new staff often erodes stability among all staff. Staff stability is the pre-condition for quality outcomes. Pilot homes said, “You have quality outcomes because you have employees who are engaged and actually want to take care of the residents.”

COST and SAVINGS:

Pilot homes report HR cost savings because you’re not turning over staff and spending the time and money on hiring and training new staff. They report care related cost savings from fewer reportables, wounds, and other care issues that stem from staff instability. They note the burden on staff is reduced through stability, citing fewer call lights when staff are stable and able to care for residents pro-actively.

HOW:

Pilot homes emphasized building relationships from the initial show of interest by a potential employee, through the screening and interview process, to extended orientation and peer support. Leaders create the conditions for staff retention through huddles, check-ins, and regular ways of supporting and appreciating staff.

WHAT:

Pilot homes described their most effective practices:

Intentional hiring

Change from hiring to fill needs too quickly to hiring the right people for the job. This breaks the cycle of turnover among newly hired staff.

One home revamped its a “refer a friend” program to make it more user friendly with fewer restrictions. It was able to hire several good people through the recommendations of their good staff. Staff stay where they have strong ties, and a refer a friend program creates those strong ties. It also rewards your good staff who made the referral.

Other pilot homes changed how they interview, to focus their interview questions on character and relational skills.

SC LTC Leadership Academy Pilot of a New Nursing Home High Value Business Model

A collaboration to strengthen front-line staff retention as the foundation for high performance.

Extended orientation

Several pilot homes extended the orientation to give new staff proper training and not just be thrown out on the floor to figure out how to do the work on their own.

Communicating with leadership

In several pilot homes, DoNs let the supervisors know of a brand new CNA and say “let’s make sure she’s supported. This is her first job. Let’s make sure we keep her because we hired her for a reason. We didn’t just say yes to anybody, we said yes to this person, for these reasons.”

Peer Mentor program

Several pilot homes assign a new staff person to an experienced person in the same job. That peer mentor is the person new staff go to if they have a question or a concern. One home developed its peer mentor program so that the peer mentor reaches out before new staff start work. Then from the first day, mentors helped. Most effective programs keep that relationship in place for several months as new employees settle in. This home empowered its mentors to develop their own practice guidelines. It supports these mentors through regular meetings to hear their feedback and provide skills training. The home involved its peer mentors in helping to understand and address issues affecting staff performance.

Peers in Interviews

Bring CNAs or nurses into interviews. Get their take. Then they have stake in person succeeding. pilot homes found that staff tend to do this less “running them off – eating their young,” when the leaders engage staff in the hiring.

Helping staff form meaningful relationships

Pilot homes built relationships with new staff. Several pilot homes used regular huddling to build relationships and generate teamwork. They used peer mentor programs to create strong relationships between new and current staff. One pilot home gathered information about staff that they could use in providing thank you gifts and performance rewards. Morale building activities were focused on strengthening relationships among staff.

Checking in through Stay Interviews

Pilot homes checked in on new staff the first day and several times the first week of employment. They followed up the next week and throughout the first month. They ask new staff, “What do you need, are you okay, can I get you anything that makes your job easier?”

Employee Surveys – follow up on answers

Pilot homes used the survey HR sends to new staff as a basis for conversation with staff. They looked at questions on the survey such as “are you happy here and did you get enough information about this company before you started?” If answers are neutral or not positive, the

SC LTC Leadership Academy Pilot of a New Nursing Home High Value Business Model

A collaboration to strengthen front-line staff retention as the foundation for high performance.

leaders follow up with new staff to address any emerging concerns before they become an actual issue.

Leadership training

Pilot homes trained leaders in how to respond quickly and effectively to on-line responses to ads. They trained leaders on effective interviews, and on ways to support new staff through check-ins and unit-level communication.

MEASURING IMPACT

Pilot homes found that this bundle of HR practices led to quality outcomes, cost savings and staff stability.

ADVICE

The practices are mutually reinforcing. The “through line” is caring about your staff as people, and meeting their needs so they can take good care of residents.