



Staff Shortages and New Nursing Home Regulations

By: Sarah DeDonatis, LNHA

Staff shortages are a widespread trend in the nursing home industry, sparking a need for these communities to attract and keep quality employees. When a nursing home is hemorrhaging good staff, finding the problem and making strategic changes can assist in retention and attraction of quality workers. The primary reasons for the high percentage of turnover of direct care staff are oftentimes lack of appreciation, overworking the good workers and the dependence on nursing pools filling in for staff loss. Even though this problem is a systemic issue across the United States, there are solutions that can be implemented to assist in the retention of good employees in order to provide residents the consistent and quality care they deserve.

The incredible care provided to elders in these communities can be overshadowed by employees feeling disrespected and treated like a number or invisible. Historically, the majority of elder care staff are single parents or are the only person making money for their household. They need a place to work where they feel a difference can be made by their efforts. When an employee feels a part of the process within their scope of work, where they can implement change effectively and be supported, they will

thrive. That empowerment assists workers professionally and personally, resulting in an employee who will be less likely to leave their facility for another. Consistent staffing in these communities is important because it leads to healthier and more stable residents. According to a [report](#) by the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (2022, Para.1) as of 2022 there was an average 52% of nursing staff loss in long-term care facilities across the nation. This is a true and present issue which needs a resolution immediately.

In the wake of new staffing requirements put into law by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on May 10, 2024, coupled with the established staff shortage, the problem just got bigger. In an [article](#) written by Edelman (2024) the author explains the new regulations and their impact on nursing facilities. The Biden Administration, in an effort to promote quality care, called for more oversight by surveyors while also increasing the required contact time that nurses and resident aids care for residents. Edelman stated the regulation became effective in August of 2024 providing a stair step approach of compliance that will happen over the next three years. Although staffing requirements have always been

enacted by CMS, the resident daily contact hours and required number of staff were historically lower. The previous staffing laws proved difficult for facilities who were unable to meet regulatory requirements, leaving many to wonder if these new regulations will shutter facilities.

Solving a staffing issue while preparing to increase contact hours and looking to hire more workers can be difficult, but not impossible with a few internal changes. Licensed facilities must begin by changing the culture within to retain quality staff to be good stewards to the residents they care for. Through supportive programming, regular training and appreciation, staff retention is possible. Quality employee programs bring the added bonus of attracting high caliber workers to apply.

Competition between facilities will be very strong because of the need to comply with regulations. Creating and implementing supportive programs immediately is paramount. Employers must find ways to pull themselves ahead and embrace the culture of change to be

competitive while also complying with the new regulations CMS has mandated. As nursing homes make positive adjustments, employee satisfaction, resident health and well-being and community appreciation for good quality care, will attract future residents and hardworking staff waiting in line for a place at the table.

Ideas for advances in employee retention will be shared in an article coming soon.

References:

- Edelman, T. (2024, May 23). *CMS publishes final rule on nurse staffing standards*. Retrieved from Center for Medicare Advocacy: <https://medicareadvocacy.org/staffing-final-rule-assessment-process/>
- High Staff Turnover: A Job Quality Crisis in Nursing Homes*. (2022, September 8). Retrieved from The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care: https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/issuess/High_Staff_Turnover-A_Job_Quality_Crisis_in_Nursing_Homes.pdf

About the Author: Sarah DeDonatis is a licensed nursing home administrator, author, speaker, blogger, and voice over actress. Her undying dedication to the empowerment of those working in the long-term care field propel her to share information and support to those who do the toughest jobs. She writes on all things 50 years old and older, with a focus on safety, security, long-term care resident information and supports and services for people who love seniors. To contact Sarah for an article, presentation or other service, please email: web@thinksarah.com.