

Professional Development

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McKnight's
Long-Term Care News & Senior Living

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Hiring advice: Cool perks rule!

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Can senior care survive the workforce storms?

Without building a thriving and sustainable workforce within 10 years, the field could face calamity

By John Hall

Nearly three million new jobs will open by 2026, and many operators are unsure how to fill them. Meanwhile, providers are grappling with how to keep the workers they have.

Experts say these challenges will require some very innovative solutions — and brave and bold decisions. Technology promises to help in many ways, but to successfully come out of this intact, a host of things need to happen.

Workforce trends

Following is a brief look at key trends shaping the long-term care workforce.

Education and training

It wasn't long ago that enrollment in nursing programs was on the decline, but that's changing, although it's too early to tell where graduates are taking their degrees.

"The good news is that more millennials are entering the nursing field than prior generations and nursing schools are creating more student positions," says Peter Corless, executive vice president of enterprise development at OnShift.

Corless adds that innovative curriculums and shifting certification standards are offering never-before-seen opportunities for advanced nurses and nurse practitioners. Shifting reimbursement rules also are calling for enhanced training for existing billing managers as the industry continues shifting toward value-based purchas-



Finding enough qualified employees is a challenge that will only intensify in the coming years, workforce experts say.

ing, and employee engagement pressures are requiring top-level executives to return to the classroom, he adds. "In addition, leaders will need to become more proficient in the non-technical, but equally important, leadership and human interaction aspects of their roles. They will need to place additional emphasis on areas such as understanding generational differences, cultural diversity and situational leadership."

Outside of clinical professionals, administrative opportunities also are evolving and in-demand. As Corless notes, opportunities are mounting for those "who are very knowledgeable in their professional area of expertise in order to increase productivity and maximize revenue, decrease expenses and drive quality outcomes."

Oddly, post-graduate work in the rehab field is not rewarded

with significantly higher pay, leading some to question its pursuit.

Christopher Krause, director of rehab at iN2L, says the rising numbers of physical and occupational therapy doctorate programs are actually chasing many students away. A major reason is the difference in pay is hardly commensurate with the heavy burden of financing, time and effort. Consequently, providers are using more associate-level staff (PTAs and OTAs) who are "less expensive."

Career paths

Clear career paths often have been cited as one of the best ways to encourage staff to advance and gain proficiency, but they aren't exactly uniform in prevalence or consistency. Says Krause, "while there is often opportunity to move from a therapist position to a managerial position, programs that genuinely prepare someone

for the rigors of rehab therapy management are often few and far between."

Corless believes career ladders are essential not only for individual advancement, but also for succession planning. "This focus will help ensure a strong management hierarchy as older workers at all levels start to retire in greater numbers," says Corless, citing a recent LeadingAge study which found 40% of senior living CEOs could be retiring within the next five years. Career paths also allow for institutional knowledge to be passed along to those who follow. They're also highly coveted by millennials, making them an essential part of retention efforts.

In short, career ladders have a snowball effect: "Often, employees who achieve higher accreditation receive more responsibilities with increased job satisfaction and a pay

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increase,” says Corless. “This in turn leads to higher quality care.”

Compensation

Pay continues to dog providers, so many of whom continue to lose talented caregivers to hospitals and big box retailers. The prospect of poor pay is, in fact, exacting a terrible toll on people in this field.

Nearly half of all Americans right are now under financial stress and have less than \$400 in liquid savings, says Corless. And, four out of five employees say personal financial issues affect their job performance, which leads to an increase in stress, an inability to focus and absenteeism and tardiness. It’s become so acute that some providers have resorted to offering employees access to their earned wages in between paychecks.

Many providers also are finally waking up to the fact that, to millennials especially, the world encompasses more than just a paycheck.

Says Krause, “The organizations that are creative and genuinely put their employees’ personal needs first, like being able to balance work schedules with those of their kids, are the ones who rarely struggle with staffing needs. Simply raising pay rates isn’t often a long-term or sustainable practice. Rates must be fair and even with the local market but employers know rates alone won’t get people in the door or keep them.”

Retention and turnover

Everyone’s talking about it. But recent evidence actually shows turnover rates are consistently lower than in other industries. The biggest problem is there are simply not enough well-trained caregivers to go



Photo: Uwe Krejci/DigitalVision/Getty Images Plus

Operators will need to be increasingly sensitive to the habits and expectations of new workers, experts claim.

around right now.

Median CNA turnover is at 51%, according to Mark Woodka, CEO of OnShift. Temps and agency workers are common. How bad has it gotten? “One senior care provider put a moratorium on admitting new residents because they did not have enough care staff to properly meet the needs of their residents,” Woodka notes.

Krause believes poor leadership more than anemic pay chases good workers away. Corless sees establishing a growth-in-employee engagement program as a positive step forward.

With 2.5 million long-term care workers needed by 2030, far-reaching comprehensive solutions have yet to surface.

Heartburn from old habits

Some say providers themselves are partly to blame for their staffing woes.

Krause says he continues to be surprised at how senior care executives repeatedly resist change, even in the face of things like the millennial avalanche. He points to slow and overly cautious adoption of technology, even as they continue hiring younger workers

who covet and use it so adeptly. As Woodka observes, “Today’s workforce wants to work for progressive organizations that invest in technologies that make their day-to-day lives easier.”

“Long-term care continues to be plagued by acceptance of the status quo,” adds Trey Mullins, senior director of post-acute operations for HealthcareSource. “Innovation is rare, and many providers just want to continue doing what they have been doing, even if there are alternatives out there that could offer better results.”

Corless urges providers to try new approaches, like recruiting those brick and mortar workers displaced by the online world, and exploiting a millennials generation that actually finds senior care work more fulfilling than any generation that has come before.

Mullins agrees. “We see providers get on average 14 applicants for a job posting,” he says. “There is real interest in working in the healthcare field. Most adults can directly relate to the challenges of having an aging parent or other family member, so understanding the importance of the issue at hand

is not a problem.”

How tech can help

High-tech companies like OnShift and HealthcareSource have marshalled information technology to provide proven methods for everything from recruiting and hiring to managing and retaining staff.

Corless says technology continues to support more efficient scheduling, a stronger work-life balance with increased flexibility and the ability to pick-up shifts — something that “provides stronger visibility into staff satisfaction, strategic planning around rewards programs and better communication between managers.”

“More than ever, today’s technology allows employers to build strategies to keep, hire and grow the next generation of healthcare providers,” adds Mullins. “Recruiters have the ability to build qualified talent pipelines by targeting and connecting to more people. Managers can build dynamic career paths and provide learning opportunities for their existing staff. Plus, they can engage with their staff by meeting them where they are — on their phones and other mobile devices.”

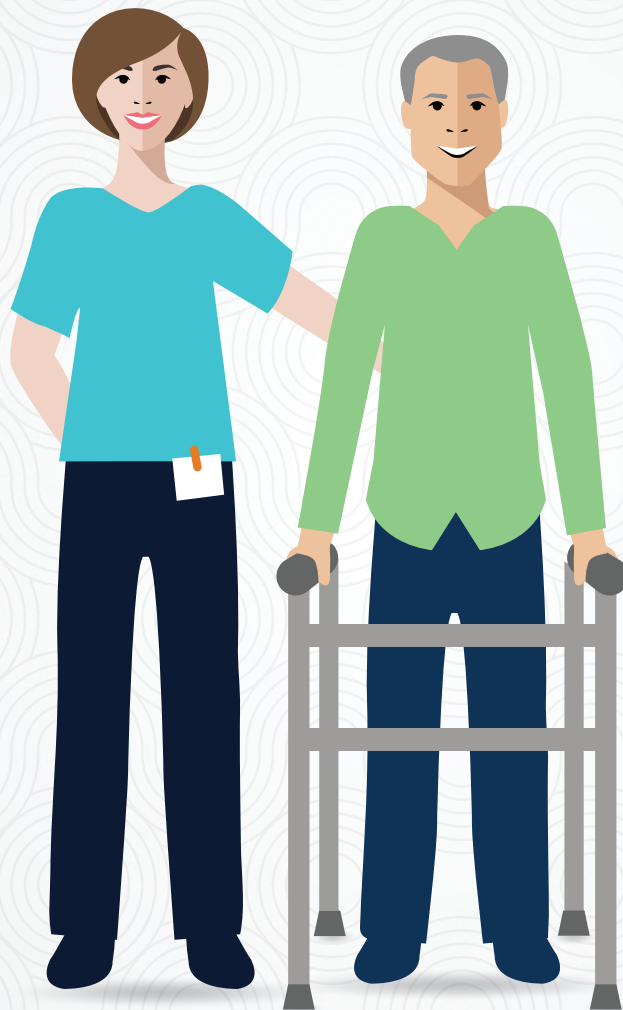
A look ahead

One executive has an anxious eye on “the herculean sourcing, hiring, and training tasks all healthcare organizations will face in the coming decade.” Justin Hess, M.S., product manager, assessments for Relias, points to the palpable need senior care providers are going to have: accommodating the biggest ever wave of aging baby boomers over the next eight years. ■

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Photo: IntegraCare

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New perks that really do work

By Lois A. Bowers

It's no secret that recruiting and retaining employees is the biggest challenge facing senior living and long-term care operators.

Survey after survey back up with data what providers know anecdotally. In February, for instance, specialty investment bank Ziegler reported the results of a poll of senior living chief financial officers that found that staffing and labor issues are by far their biggest concerns. They were being cited as top worries by 79% of the not-for-profit company executives who participated.

Sometimes it takes some creativity to stand out to current and prospective workers.

Wexford, PA-based IntegraCare's Continued Attendance Rewards program, fittingly known by the acronym CAR, gives employees an extra rea-

son to come to work every day. Those who do are eligible for a prize drawing in which the top award is a car. Other offerings include televisions, weeks of paid time off, computers and more. Employees enter the contest with vouchers they receive for each pay period based on perfect attendance.

"We ask our residents and their family members to encourage our team and help make our communities better places to work, which in turn make them a better place to live," IntegraCare CEO Richard Irwin says.

Thinking big

Bellevue, WA-based Aegis Living is thinking large, too. The company holds an annual "Dream Big Lottery," where it gives away all-expenses-paid vacations as a way to thank workers for their loyalty and commitment. Employees who

have been with the company for at least three years are eligible — and the longer workers have been employed at Aegis Living, the more chances they have to win.

Last year's trips included five to Disney theme parks, two to a dude ranch and one to New York City.

"This kind of employee benefit not only serves as a unique and innovative employee perk, it gives families a chance at a dream vacation that some might not be able to otherwise afford," says Aegis Living Founder, Chairman and CEO Dwayne Clark.

Delayed payoff

Sometimes a big payoff for employment longevity with an operator may be delayed but still potentially very valuable.

That's the case with a benefit offered by Virginia-based English Meadows Senior Living. In

2017, the company announced a new perk for long-term employees: free care at their places of employment after retirement.

"We felt that if someone dedicated their lives to a company, they should be able to participate in what the company offers to the public," says Mike Williams, co-owner and CEO of English Meadows.

After 20 years of service, workers are eligible for a free year of care at the campus where they worked. The benefit grows to two years at 30 years of service and three years after 40 years of service.

Nine of the company's more than 160 employees across three campuses already had qualified for the benefit at the time of the announcement, according to the company. That includes three employees with more than 40 years of service.

"Consistency is a good thing in our business — and probably most businesses," co-owner and President Steve Orndoff says. "We treat our team like family. I hope we get many more with over 40 years of service."

Making the grade

When it comes to assisted living, turnover is especially problematic among certified nurse aides and workers in dining services and environmental services, according to the 2018 "Assisted Living Salary & Benefits Report" released in January by the Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service. Some providers offer opportunities for advancement through education as another way to attract, develop and retain top talent.

West Point, PA-based Acts Retirement Communities, for instance, has a tuition reim-

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bursment program that is available to any employee who enrolls in a job-related course of study. Those pursuing associate degrees are eligible for up to \$4,000 per year; bachelor's degrees, \$5,000; master's degrees, \$6,000. The organization offers a tuition pre-payment program for employees who make less than \$29,000 per year.

Additionally, the Acts Corporate University program offers lifelong professional and personal learning opportunities — some at a discount — on-site and through several educational institutions. ACU also sponsors leadership academies, GED and citizenship support, professional development for employees to obtain and maintain licenses and certifications, and e-learning.

With an eye toward the future, the organization offers a formal mentoring program designed to support succession planning involving high-potential employees as well as several scholarship programs for high school students, including one for students who plan to study culinary arts in college.

Any specific perks offered to employees are part of a larger culture that reflects an organization's efforts to make workers feel valued and important and, therefore, more likely to stay and tell friends about job openings. Some employers offer financial enticements for those referrals.

Two changes last year at Holiday Retirement, the country's largest operator of independent living communities, as well as the desire to "stay relevant," presented the opportunity — and the necessity — to reinvent the company's culture, says Karen Sheean, the organization's

senior vice president of human resources.

Holiday needed to hire more than 150 people when it relocated its headquarters from Lake Oswego, OR, to Winter Park, FL, and needed to attract additional people at the community level when it changed

its management model from one that relied on live-in managers to a more traditional structure.

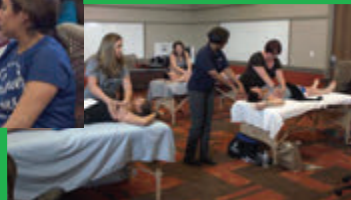
Sometimes the smaller perks are the most effective, Sheean says.

"When you're trying to re-create culture, it's not the

high-dollar, high-end stuff that makes the difference," she says. "It's the time you spend with your people, and it's the recognition that's as easy as a thank you card and giving them more responsibility. That's what we're finding is really making a difference for us." ■



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Salaries for admins near \$107k, DONs up to \$93k

By Liza Berger

By most indications, the U.S. economy has been humming along, following years of recession and recovery. That robustness has had a lopsided effect on nursing homes, leading to increased competition for certain clinical positions, such as nurses and frontline staff, and reduced competition for administrators and directors of nursing.

These are just a few conclusions that may be drawn from the 2017-2018 “Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report,” the largest annual survey of long-term care professionals.

Initially, it is unclear how leadership positions trended over the last year. Among all facilities that participated in the survey, the average annual salary of administrators increased by 4.5%, to \$106,594, while salaries of assistant administrators plummeted by more than 9%, to \$61,648. Directors of nursing fared reasonably well with an increase of 3.1%, to \$92,822.

The survey marked the 40th annual industry analysis from Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service (HCS). Published in cooperation with LeadingAge and supported by the American Health Care Association, the report surveyed approximately 9,500 nursing homes across the United States. There were 1,970 responses to the survey, resulting in a response rate of nearly 22%.

The larger and arguably more accurate story about salaries can be read from a different set of statistics — those facilities that participated in both last year’s



Photo: Thomas Northcut/DigitalVision/Getty Images Plus

Employees have been seeing the best pay hikes in nearly a decade.

survey and this year’s survey (“same participating facilities”). Going by this standard, administrators’ salaries rose by a more modest 2.98%, to \$97,401, while salaries for directors of nursing increased by 2.64%, to \$91,444. Because there was not a significant enough sample among assistant administrators, this position was not represented. Salary increases for executive directors and chief financial officers (CFOs) were also less than 3%.

Rosanne Zabka, director of reports for HCS, noted that this slight increase for leadership positions represents a departure from years past.

“As far as trends go, the past few years we were seeing a growth in salary of the CFO (chief financial officer),” she says. “This year, we did not see the increase in the administrator and CFO being the largest, but more the RNs, LPNs, and RN supervisors and LPN supervisors.”

Salary cool down

The numbers pointing to modest year-to-year increases for administrators and DONs resonate with long-term care recruitment experts.

“Salaries for administrators, directors of nursing and executive directors have been holding the last year or two after jumping for several years,” says Anthony Perry, the president of Executive Search Solutions, whose clients represent about 15% of all nursing homes nationally. “For a few years, there was a lot of competition for the best professionals in certain markets, and the wages just kept creeping up. To be the best, there was a certain threshold you had to meet ... There’s not an aggressive move to buy someone out from their competitor that I’ve seen for a few years.”

Sue Martin, senior vice president of interim leadership at senior-level recruitment firm B.E. Smith, pointed out the salary increases for these top-

level positions is not as high as previous years for the several reasons.

Industry consolidation is resulting in a shift of roles and responsibilities. Organizations are waiting to see how healthcare reform changes the industry and regulations and reviewing salaries and compensation plans to align more closely with models of care. Plus, the industry is experiencing an exodus of experienced leaders, partially due to baby boomer retirements, largely creating opportunities for up-and-coming leaders.

Meanwhile, industry veteran Paul Gavejian, managing director of Total Compensation Solutions, based in Armonk, NY, waxed philosophical about this year’s smaller increases among administrators and directors of nursing.

“There are no home runs in this business,” he says. “It’s all base hits and moving around the bases slowly. The baseball analogy is a good one here. There are not big increases or changes to note.”

Nurses in driver’s seat

Some positions did score what might be considered home runs. Salaries rose by 3% or higher for staff nurses and charge staff nurses. The salary for the nursing supervisor (RN) increased by 2.99%, to \$62,583.

Perry says such increases ring true from his point of view.

“Gone are the days of 3% across the board,” he says. “Companies are being more thoughtful about how they are distributing the total increase,

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giving certain positions a higher increase than others, either based on demand or trying to relieve compression created through wage creep.”

More money is going to CNA and RN wages in his facilities than LVNs [licensed vocational nurses], dietary staff or similar positions.

“They are putting the funds where it’s needed to attract the staff,” he says. “As the economy improves, the employment picture for long-term care gets harder. There is more competition and more types of jobs.”

And as more Americans are living longer, demand for skilled nurses is growing fiercer across the acute and post-acute sectors, Martin pointed out. Higher wages for nurses “coincides with a growing demand for hospital services caused by aging baby boomers and an increase in patients flowing from hospitals to post-acute care facilities due to reimbursement and regulatory changes,” she says.

In addition, Martin attributed the higher nurse wages to a shift in payment and care models, which means new career opportunities for these professionals, and a large number of senior nurses retiring, which puts pressure on facilities to find senior nurses to replace them.

In short, it appears to be a great time to be an RN.

“The credential itself gives you



Survey results show that employees are generally paid better than ever.

more options and entitles you to a higher wage from the start,” says Perry, pointing out that opportunities abound in long-term care, including higher-acuity skilled nursing facilities, along with assisted living and home hospice, as well as school systems and private practice.

Top-to-bottom demand

The same might be said for certified nurse aides. Wages for lead CNAs rose by 3.09%, to \$13.96 an hour, while pay for non-certified nurse aides, also called resident assistants, increased by 3.5%, to \$10.90 an hour. Perry has experienced first-hand the enormous demand for CNAs. His clients have been asking for his firm’s services in the area of companywide recruitment, not just

executive-level recruitment.

“For a number of clients, we’ve assumed total responsibility from a candidate development standpoint,” he said. “They, in many cases, have abandoned their own advertising efforts and candidate development efforts, and given us that responsibility.”

“At this moment, I’m looking for a CFO for a company with more than 70 facilities,” he added. “But I’m also looking for hundreds of CNAs for another client and everything in-between.”

Other hourly positions seeing an uptick in pay included dietary aides and housekeeping (up 3.4%) and laundry aides (up 3.4%), according to the report.

In certain regions of the country, competition is growing for

food service positions, observed Matt Leach, senior consultant with Total Compensation Solutions. In Arizona and Florida, he says, continuing care retirement communities are trying to enhance their game in the dining arena, in some cases employing bartenders. This forces them to compete for labor in the food sector.

“So they have to pay more and compete at a different level than they traditionally have done,” Leach noted.

The churn burn

Underscoring the fierce competition for certain positions are high national annual turnover rates across the board.

Turnover for RNs rose to 35.7%. That compares to 31.2% last year. Meanwhile, turnover rates for LPNs increased to 30.8% from 26.7% last year, and CNA turnover expanded to 38.8%, compared to 36.6% last year. Dining services also experienced a spike in turnover — to 35.1%, compared to 30.9% last year.

Turnover for top-level executives also jumped — to 17.6% this year from 10.7% last year.

In many cases, facilities are contributing to the turnover problem by continuing to compensate positions, particularly RNs, LPNs, CNAs and dining staff, based on tenure and not performance, Leach said. ■

Recent salaries and increases (all facilities, by percentage)

Title	2013	+%	2014	+%	2015	+%	2016	+%	2017	+%
Administrator*	95,200	0.43	95,178 (0.0002)		100,000	5	102,003	2.00	106,564	4.5
Asst. Admin.*	65,300	0.46	71,050	8.8	69,222	-2.6	67,890	-1.92	61,648	-9.2
DON	82,500	0.38	85,000	3.0	86,692	2	90,003	3.82	92,822	3.1
Asst. DON	66,425	2.19	66,560	0.2	67,320	1.1	68,640	1.96	70,013	2.0

*(Health Services)

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Will #MeToo movement sweep long-term care?

By John Hall

Long-term care providers have long been haunted by elder abuse, particularly when it was of a sexual nature. It mattered little whether the abuse was inflicted by a fellow resident or a facility staff member.

In early 2017, a sea change swept through American society over what is perhaps the best kept open secret ever: sexual harassment. Out of it sprung the so-called “#MeToo” movement, which finally made it safe for victims to come forward without fear of recrimination and loss of position, job or income. It didn’t take long for people to realize the movement would not be confined to politics and entertainment.

In February of that year, the network CNN published a damning indictment of sexual harassment in nursing homes. As reported in *McKnight’s Long-Term Care News* and elsewhere, the network’s analysis of nursing home inspection and citation reports found more than 1,000 facilities had been cited for “somehow mishandling or failing to prevent alleged cases of sexual assault at their facilities in recent years.”

Even more disturbing: CNN’s conclusion that sexual assaults of nursing home residents by facility employees are “widespread” and “little-discussed.”

Industry reaction was swift.

LeadingAge implored that such abuses “must never happen again.” The American Health Care Association and the National Center for Assist-



Sexual harassment remains a problem confronting many sectors, including senior living/post-acute care.

ed Living described the cases “deeply troubling” while adding that any person “who commits these heinous acts should be penalized to the fullest extent of the law.”

Not long after the CNN report, the website BuzzFeed said its own investigation uncovered cases of more than 3,000 employees at medical and surgical hospitals who had filed sexual harassment charges with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) between 1995 and 2016. As reported by the site HealthcareDive, the BuzzFeed report highlighted more than 170,000 sexual harassment claims across multiple industries in healthcare, including nearly 2,000 in ambulatory healthcare services and more than 1,500 in nursing care facilities.

Indeed, the issue of sexual harassment promises to be a major force in the years to come, one that certainly won’t be confined to human resour-

ces offices. The issue will likely affect every single existing and new employee in every senior living setting.

“Increased awareness and a societal shift toward intolerance of sexual harassment contribute significantly to increased reporting in the senior living industry,” Lou Ann Robinson, RN, BSN, compliance officer, content development for Relias, tells *McKnight’s*. “As a society, we are sending the message that “this [sexual harassment] is not acceptable.”

Case law on sexual harassment is extensive, but as everyone has seen over the past year, so much of it has yet to be uncovered.

As Wikipedia aptly describes it, “sexual harassment involves a range of behavior from mild annoyances to unwanted touching and in extreme cases, sexual assault and rape.”

And as experts caution, long-term care staff from top to bottom would do well to understand the many verbal, nonverbal and

physical forms it can take.

According to Robinson, “critical elements of an effective sexual harassment policy include clear, concise, understandable language, and definitions, enhanced with examples when necessary. Stated guidelines for reporting, with multiple avenues for making a complaint, escalating and communicating, are crucial to an effective policy, as well as written assurance that the policy applies to every level of the organization.”

At the end of the day, according to Robinson, facilitating the best possible environment to prevent and mitigate sexual harassment includes:

- Demonstration by word and deed of senior leadership;
- Accountability of each individual to report known or suspected sexual harassment; and
- Frequent and regular communication of a zero-tolerance policy to every person within the organization. ■

Deportations could fuel field's hiring challenges

By John Andrews

Supporters of President Trump like his idea of building a huge wall between the U.S. and Mexico, deporting non-citizens and banning the immigration of people from certain countries. It's a philosophy that is integral to the America First platform that got him elected in 2016.

But a massive movement against immigrants would severely hurt the long-term care and senior living industries, which are heavily dependent on this labor force. Without Latinos, Pacific Islanders, Caribbean Islanders, East Asians and Africans to fill direct care jobs in the industry, the chronic shortage of workers would be much worse, says researcher Stephen Campbell.

"Without immigrants, our long-term care system would crumble," says Campbell, policy research associate for PHI. "There are nearly 1 million immigrants in direct care, and we're increasingly relying on immigrants to meet new demand for long-term care. In 2005, one in five workers was an immigrant, whereas in 2015, one in four workers was an immigrant."

PHI carefully studies the impact of immigrants on the long-term care workforce and its data shows the majority of LTC workers are from Mexico (15%), followed by the Philippines (10%), Jamaica (7%), Haiti (7%) and the Dominican Republic (6%), though the industry employs immigrants from approximately 150 countries.

Those statistics are evolving,



Immigrants play a critical role on the front lines at many senior living and post-acute settings.

however, as the composition of immigrants in direct care is continually changing. For example, from 2005 to 2015, the population of African immigrants doubled, from 65,000 workers to 130,000. During that time, Latino immigrants grew from 163,000 to 272,000 and East Asian workers nearly tripled, from 21,000 to 61,000.

These immigrants are filling jobs primarily in the direct care ranks, such as personal care aides, home health aides and nursing assistants.

As immigrants have established a solid foothold in long-term care, Campbell contends that "policy changes aimed at diminishing the supply of direct care workers will destabilize care at a time when we need it most." Most at risk for disruption are the more than 10,000 workers from travel-ban countries — primarily Iran and Somalia — and nearly 35,000 workers from countries such as

Haiti and El Salvador, whose temporary protected status will soon end.

"When these workers are no longer eligible for employment, employers will face acute recruitment challenges," Campbell says. "In addition, proposed changes to family-based immigration would disproportionately impact the people who predominantly rely on family ties to gain legal status."

The America First movement has included harsh rhetoric about immigration and Campbell maintains that calls for massive deportations have had a detrimental impact on foreign workers in direct care.

"They might fear for their own safety or the safety of their friends and family members," he explains.

Also at risk are the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) population, also known as "Dreamers." Their protection is vulnerable now

under the Trump Administration, and if DACA is removed, some direct care workers may be forced to leave their jobs, Campbell says.

"In the bigger picture, when direct care workers feel threatened with deportation, or when they see their friends and family members threatened with deportation, this uncertainty undermines their ability to commit fully to the job," he says. "In the end, an unstable direct care workforce undermines care quality for older adults and people with disabilities."

Yet even though some members of their workforce may be at risk for deportation, long-term care employers can act by partnering with organizations rooted in immigrant communities to provide referrals for support services and by distributing know-your-rights publications from organizations that focus on civil liberties and immigrant rights, Campbell says. ■

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Can Millennials ease the worker shortage?

By John Andrews

Tapping seniors to fill abundant job vacancies in long-term care is one strategy employers can use to narrow its shortage of available workers. Older employees have a proven work ethic, are energized to make a difference and have the desire to contribute their talents and skills.

But what about going in the opposite direction? How much focus have long-term care communities put on seeking out the younger generation, especially millennials and the newly minted Generation Z? Do they have the interest, ability and fortitude to make a positive impact on the long-term care industry?

Despite the negative stereotypes that accompany the generation born between 1982-2000 — unmotivated, entitled, self-centered — the reality is that millennials could be (and already are) a realistic solution, not only for direct care jobs, but skilled positions such as nursing.

A study by *Health Affairs* found that nursing shortages brought on by the gradual retirement of baby boomers would be much worse if those vacancies weren't filled by millennials, who researchers say are entering the nursing workforce at nearly double the rate of boomers' departures.

Perhaps millennials and boomers have more in common than first thought. Both generations were spooked by the Great Recession of 2008 and are seeking financial security. Another trait they seem to share is altruism — they want to perform meaningful work that



Millennials are often mischaracterized as lazy and selfish. They may be critical to addressing labor woes, experts say.

makes a contribution to society.

The long-term care industry offers financial stability and helping seniors is a noble pursuit, so it may very well fit the aspirations of the millennials and the Generation Z that follows them. Overlapping the millennials somewhat, Generation Z has been identified as covering the birth years of 1995 through 2010, which makes the oldest “Z” members 23.

Although they've been segmented into two separate generations, millennials and Generation Z are basically peers and share many of the same values. It is up to employers to identify what is important to these younger workers and tailor a marketing plan geared toward recruiting them, say analysts at the LaSalle Network, a staffing and culture firm in suburban Chicago.

LaSalle offers three pointers to employers on how they

should position themselves with younger workers — offer growth, engage in networking and showcase a dynamic corporate culture.

Mapping out career progression for key positions gives a visual sense of how workers can advance within the organization and that appeals to younger workers. A recent LaSalle white paper found that 70% of recent college graduates ranked “opportunity for growth” as the most important factor in their job searches.

LaSalle CEO Tom Gimbel, told the *Chicago Tribune* that “People, especially early in their careers, want to feel that they're wanted and that there's a real investment in their future.”

Surprisingly, Generation Z, despite growing up in the digital age, prefer face-to-face communication and are actively networking to find jobs they find attractive. The Society for

Human Resources Management reports that 84% of Generation Z prefers meeting face-to-face as their preferred mode of communication. To capitalize on this desire, LaSalle recommends exhibiting at university networking events and career fairs.

Can the long-term care industry provide a corporate culture that appeals to young people? It goes beyond offering ping-pong tables and happy hour get-togethers. A dynamic company culture values employees and provides career development resources for workers to grow.

An effective way to showcase the company culture is for current employees to talk to applicants and answer their questions. LaSalle analysts say it is also important to screen candidates to make sure they fit the company culture, so that only people who will strengthen the team are hired. ■

Seniors are proving to be a vital labor resource

By John Andrews

Retirees aren't taking a seat in the rocking chair after their careers are over. Instead, they see post-retirement as a new horizon for work opportunities and are actively seeking them out in their golden years.

AARP has meticulously studied the impact of seniors on the workforce as part of an overall survey of more than 1,500 workers aged 45 to 74. While the survey project generated a bonanza of data from respondents, AARP researchers found that overall, seniors are looking to make a difference and that they have an abundance of energy to create a positive influence on society.

Susan K. Weinstock, vice president of financial resilience programming at AARP, tells *McKnight's Senior Living* that seniors have myriad reasons for continuing employment past age 65, including debt burdens, decreasing income replacement rates and the demise of defined employer pension plans. So finances definitely play a key role in wanting to keep working.

But, she says, making money is not the only reason why people decide to stay in the workforce.

"Research shows that nine in 10 retirees who continue working do so to stay active and involved," she says. "Almost all retirees who worked for pay in retirement gave a positive reason for doing so, saying that they enjoy working or a new job opportunity came along."

Survey respondents sketched out their ideal work environment for AARP and among the



Many senior living organizations are turning to older workers as a way to help fill depleted ranks with reliable workers.

Photo: Westend61/Getty Images Plus

20 characteristics they listed, three stand out: a job that makes use of one's skills and talents, a friendly work environment and work that is meaningful to society. The opportunity for part-time work also ranked high.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the AARP study, one trend the association didn't track was where seniors preferred to work. It makes sense, however, that the long-term care and senior living sectors could be places where these older workers can fulfill their desires to earn extra money, utilize their skill sets and make a difference in the lives of others.

Understanding what older workers want can give LTC and SL community operators an advantage in seeking out this demographic and offering the work opportunities they are looking for.

"The findings about how older workers view work and retirement, their on-the-job experiences and the factors

that may foster or undermine continued employment may be of value to employers interested in retaining and recruiting older workers as part of their talent management strategies," AARP researchers contend. "They may suggest policies and programs on work hours and workplace flexibility, helping caregivers combine work and family life, tackling perceived discrimination and encouraging later retirement."

Older workers are using multiple media for job searches, AARP reports, going beyond traditional newspaper ads and utilizing social media and web-based job search sites. They also network with friends and family and often contact employers directly.

While they have a lot of desire and energy to give prospective employers, older workers do face some disadvantages – namely, age discrimination and family caregiving obligations. Workers age 50 and over report that age

discrimination has commonly kept them from being hired and is a key reason for being mistreated while on the job.

Caregiving is a common responsibility for older workers and often leads to job disruption, AARP found. Nearly 60% of survey respondents say they are responsible for a parent, child, spouse or friend, and the number rises to nearly 70% for those between the ages of 45 and 56.

Despite those challenges, however, the senior workforce is vibrant, eager and ready to contribute to employers willing to have them.

"Obviously, it's easier for white collar, well-educated professionals to work well into their 80s or 90s than it is for blue collar workers in physically demanding fields," Weinstock says. "That said, those who continue to work into their later years express a strong interest in remaining active, while they seem less motivated by financial needs." ■



MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: EMPLOYEE SCHEDULING

The stakes for scheduling have never been higher

Operators need to understand the big picture, while embracing new tools and management options

By John Hall

It's ironic that an industry beset by so many rigid rules now finds itself grappling with a workforce whose dominant job demand can best be described as flexibility.

For long-term care providers and owner-operators, the challenges of maintaining adequate and stable staffing have never been greater, made even more challenging by a 21-37-year-old millennial workforce that is as unique as it is demanding.

A number of key things distinguish this emerging workforce, says Mark Woodka, the CEO of OnShift, a leading firm focused exclusively on solving healthcare's workforce challenges:

- Millennials crave "work-life balance" (80% consider it a prerequisite) and flexible work schedules are their highest priorities.
- An even greater expectation is unfettered access to scheduling information and accommodating that access through the coveted smartphone, which allows them to see available upcoming shifts and make schedule changes on the fly. Its absence is, in fact, a non-starter. "They are turned off by organizations that don't have technology that allows them to access the information they need, when they need it, right from their smartphone,"

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
EMPLOYEE SCHEDULING

OnShift

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Employees are bringing new talents and expectations to the job. Among the latter: easy access to scheduling information.

Photos: Chris Ryan/OJO Images/Getty Images Plus

says Woodka.

- Turnover and attrition can literally haunt a provider today. Demand far outstrips supply, and every employee knows that. All but 3% of the entire long-term caregiving force are looking at greener pastures at any given moment. And many employees hold multiple jobs to make ends meet, which only magnifies scheduling challenges. Retention risks are great. "If caregivers and other staff are not able to easily access their schedules, pick up available shifts, and place requests with the ease and convenience of their smartphones, they are at greater risk of leaving your organization," Woodka adds.

As challenging as these trends are, the stakes have never been higher. "Staffing is one of the strongest determinants of quality care," says Woodka. "If an orga-

THREE TIPS

- 1 Invest in software that is purpose-built for senior care, going beyond the basics of online scheduling to meet the specific workforce challenges in complex senior care environments.
- 2 Differentiate your organization and engage your employees by providing on-the-go schedule access, more control over when they work and an automated rewards and recognition program.
- 3 Demand that your scheduling software integrates with time and attendance and clinical applications.

nization can't maintain appropriate staffing levels, the care and well-being of their residents are at serious risk." Inadequate staffing levels and unhappy workers in general can correlate with increased deficiencies and family satisfaction, and lower Five-Star ratings.

"Skilled providers in particular can no longer afford to operate without a complete picture of how they're staffing," Woodka says. "Doing so causes labor costs to rise even further, as costly issues like overtime and using expensive agency workers become commonplace."

It's only logical that providers are now finding employee-centric strategies the best way to address today's workforce challenges. "Those that do, see big benefits such as lower absenteeism, lower turnover, higher productivity and higher profitability," Woodka asserts. ■



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MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: ENGAGING EMPLOYEES

Engagement is a key to high worker performance

Creativity is essential when it comes to encouraging and managing employees working in this sector

By John Hall

Managing employees is a profession that has had to re-invent itself hundreds and hundreds of times across the centuries to reflect changes in social mores, laws and regulations, and myriad changes in shifting demographics. And that's just the foundational stuff.

When we look at the art and science of managing employees in healthcare, specifically long-term care, the human resource/people management business becomes exponentially more complex.

One of the most significant challenges of managing people in the coming years will be a simple matter of supply and demand. The numbers of people who will be entering long-term care settings as residents far outstrip the number of incoming new caregiver workers.

Another major challenge is the changing workforce demographic. "As millennials represent a greater percentage of the long-term care workforce, it is important to understand this generation values different things than the generations that preceded them," says Kathy Douglas, RN, workforce strategy at ABILITY Network, a leading information technology company helping providers and payers simplify the administrative and clinical complexities of



Photos: Hinterhaus Productions/Digital Vision/Getty Images Plus

Employees who feel engaged are more likely to feel like they are contributing to the organization, experts say.

healthcare.

"Millennials rely heavily on technology to manage all aspects of their lives," Douglas adds. "And not only that, these tech-savvy, connected workers who grew up with social media and sharing seek collaboration and community in their work as much as in their personal life."

As Douglas asserts, managers who understand and embrace these changes are well-equipped to make decisions about adopting the use of modern tools that enable staff engagement, as well as updating associated policies and practices that create work environments in which staff can thrive.

"Anecdotally, we've had several large clients who were having trouble filling shifts using traditional top-down scheduling," says Douglas. "With the help of

THREE TIPS

- 1 Support healthy staff manager relationships. Educate managers on generational values, and adopt policies and practices that honor these values.
- 2 Take advantage of technology to make it easier for staff to engage in how they work and limit disruption of their off-hours life.
- 3 Enable collaboration, transparency and community wherever you can. Today's worker wants to engage with each other and help. Provide tools and technology that helps.

the right technology and updating their policies and practices to better match the desires of their staff, they were able to change their approach and create a more transparent and collaborative scheduling environment.

"Suddenly, employees could see the schedule for the whole organization, not just their own," she adds. "The result: staff volunteered to work more shifts. They had more choices and more information to make those choices. In cases where they could see who they were working with, or where there was significant need, they were more likely to help each other out and fill open shifts. It was really powerful."

Creating an engaging culture—one that demonstrates managers' value and trust and enables teams to do their best work. ■

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
ENGAGING EMPLOYEES



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MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Training can be a never-ending challenge

There are no shortcuts to building a staff that can functionally meet the many changes that face the field

By John Hall

It seems enough that long-term care providers today struggle with recruiting, hiring and keeping a less-than-bountiful supply of caregivers. But in an industry beset by mounting regulations and litigious and compliance risks from care-related adverse events, providers are constantly challenged by finding the time and resources to ensure their staffs are properly educated and trained.

It's no surprise that providers wonder if the minimum 75 training hours and another 16 of supervised practical training that are federally required for aide certification are even enough. In a 2016 report by the Government Accounting Office, regulators openly acknowledged that the goal of long-term care workforce planning depends on "an adequate supply of appropriately trained workers that is available to meet demand."

Of course, it doesn't help that the bar keeps rising and requirements are constantly in flux. One thing many agree: Conventional training is inadequate. Even academia has begun to take notice. MIT Professor and author Paul Osterman, for example, recently told Reuters required training is too brief. He argued that lower-level clinical workers in nursing homes should receive broader training in areas like physical



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Dementia care training has become increasingly important in senior care.

therapy and diabetes coaching.

Surprisingly, one of the pillars of training is education, yet rising numbers of doctorate level programs may be having the opposite intended effect. "In the rehab world, we're seeing most PT and OT schools moving toward these programs which, in my opinion, has decreased the numbers of new students who are willing to take on the effort and financial burden required to get a degree," says Christopher Krause, director of rehab at iN2L, a leading provider of person-centered engagement.

As for those moving targets, dementia care regs are a good example. "They have gotten everyone's attention but no one seems to know how they're going to approach it," Krause says, adding iN2L has taken on that challenge by making it as easy as possible for staff to reach such training on its systems. iN2L

believes, in fact, that dementia care training is one of the more important and specialized skill sets needed in the senior care space today.

Because training is such an expensive endeavor and is in short supply locally, many providers opt for online training programs and webinars, which can have limitations as well. "For training to be most effective, it must be relevant and geared toward adult learning styles," Krause says. "It should be delivered in an efficient manner and, if at all possible, be supported by CEU credits where applicable."

Because of online limitations, Krause urges providers to find and establish on-site training during caregivers' regular schedules. "Plus, it should be as directly relevant to their roles and should support their ability to be successful caregivers," he says. "We build our systems with training materials that support skills, not only with using our systems, but we provide education on important topics like dementia care needs," he says. This supports providers' needs to be compliant with required regulatory training. Such training also helps increase staff satisfaction and successful interactions with residents and families.

"This, in turn, drives outcomes that supports patient and family satisfaction," he adds.

Effective training doesn't always involve costly two-day conference trips, either. Krause says many providers have realized a great deal of success utilizing shorter, more frequent online training and/or accessing already available training on an existing platform. ■

THREE TIPS

- 1 Offer a "steady diet" of training content with different methods, approaches and delivery models. Make it accessible, interactive and fun.
- 2 Employee training is no different from caregiving in one critical way: "Just like we have a person-centered approach to providing care, we should offer a person-centered approach to training," one observer says.
- 3 Once trained, give caregivers the tools to succeed. The knowledge of what to do, when and why is critical to a caregiver's successful interactions.

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE
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MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: TURNOVER REDUCTION

Proactive solutions to turnover begin at hiring

Start if your organization wants to make sure it does everything possible to keep the keepers

By John Hall

Statistics about long-term care turnover rates could literally fill a book no one — especially senior care managers — would cozy up to some evening. Yet, the ever-morphing senior care workforce is known as much for its fickleness as its size, which is small and getting smaller.

Still, anyone charged with recruiting, hiring and keeping aides, nurses and other clinical staff ignores these sobering trends at their own peril:

- The most recent national statistics on long-term care staffing from the American Health Care Association's 2015 report haven't changed much — turnover rates hovering at 55% for direct care workers and registered nurses. Overall, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, industry turnover is around 31%.
- While long-term care turnover rates trail national averages across all industries, the labor pool itself is shrinking. An improving economy also is causing eyes to wander. One recent industry report on the workforce finds that many workers are chasing better wages, benefits and conditions in the foodservice and hospital industry, for example.
- An even more troubling trend is happening among new hires.



Photos: Kevin Dodge/Blend Images/Getty Images Plus

High turnover rates create headaches for managers — and fellow workers.

Four out of 10 providers report new hire turnover rates of 20% or more, according to a 2017 report by HealthcareSource, a leading provider of talent management software for the healthcare industry. And surprisingly, nearly 30% of senior care providers don't even know what their new hire turnover rate is. Which means about one-third of providers don't know that the costs to replace a lost employee can be as high as 21% of the individual's salary.

Behind the numbers

"One issue is that high turnover rates have become accepted as part of working in long-term care," says Trey Mullins, senior director, post-acute operations for HealthcareSource. "Believing progress can be made is an important part of the solution."

Another issue fueling turnover

is the disconnect that can sometimes happen between middle management and frontline caregivers, leading to clashes that can cause employees to leave. Mullins believes this disconnect is usually due to a lack of management training for new supervisors, as well as the general difficulty in predicting success in leadership roles.

Approaching a solution

Providers can combat some of these issues through their hiring processes. "Having candidates take scientifically validated behavioral assessments can help you measure both for job and culture fit," says Mullins. "Using such assessments early on in the process can raise any potential areas of concern, so hiring managers can ask the right questions during the interview to dig deeper and be able to make the most

informed hiring decisions. You want to be sure that when you hire, you're hiring someone you will be able to keep. If you can solve hiring, many of your other staffing issues simply go away."

"You have to take the time to find the right person for the position, not just fill a slot in the schedule as quickly as possible," Mullins adds. "Build a strong hiring pipeline through continuous recruiting. Be proactive in recruiting; use data to forecast your hiring demands and know when you're going to need help."

In the end, providers need to keep turnover in perspective. "Loyal, long-term employees are admirable, but even if they're with you one or two years, quality employees are what residents and clients really need," Mullins says. ■

THREE TIPS

- 1 Always be recruiting. Hiring shouldn't be a knee-jerk reaction; you should have a plan. Build a pipeline of good candidates for your frequently open positions.
- 2 Utilize a data-driven hiring process. Use verified tools to assess your applicants and find the best fit for both the position and your organization.
- 3 Invest in your people. Develop career paths. Spend time on onboarding and training.

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
TURNOVER REDUCTION



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We conduct business according to the Golden Rule, treating our customers, residents and each other fairly and honestly. Guardian's commitment to excellence and to provide outstanding customer service defines our corporate character and inspires us every day.

What We Do

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Our Mission

Guardian aims to personally empower our customers with the resources they need to provide the best service to their residents. We maintain the highest level of service and sensitivity required to meet the individualized needs of each community.

The Guardian Way

Guardian Pharmacy Services has a unique business model that allows us to offer both the personalized services of a local pharmacy and the resources of a large corporation.

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We believe this business approach leads to better customer service, greater accuracy, and efficiency of medication distribution.

FastFacts



Website: www.guardianpharmacy.net

Phone: (888) 535-4779

Email: answers@guardianpharmacy.net

Address: 171 17th Street, Suite 1400, Atlanta, GA 30309

Date founded: 2004

Presence: Guardian Pharmacy Services is based out of Atlanta, GA and currently has 29 pharmacy locations that serve nearly 90,000 patients across 20 states.

What We Offer

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