



AHCA / NCAL Workforce & Hiring Research

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AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION

NCAL[®]
NATIONAL CENTER FOR ASSISTED LIVING

Overview

- Purpose
 - Better equip organizations at every level of the LTC industry to recruit, hire and retain high-quality staff
 - Better understand the sentiment of current and potential frontline healthcare workers regarding work in LTC
 - Identify inflection points in career paths where potential staff can be influenced to accept a position in the industry
- While some of the findings are to be expected as with any job – such as pay and hours being important considerations – other factors are unique to healthcare generally and LTC in particular.
- AHCA/NCAL continues to call on federal lawmakers to address systemic funding shortfalls and other issues that complicate hiring efforts. But our hope is this research will help optimize our efforts in the current environment.

Research Components

- Research to date has included three components:
 1. One-on-one interviews with current LTC workers
 2. Panel discussion with health care workers not currently working in LTC
 3. Panel discussion with current students and people early in their careers who may pursue nursing or health care work in the future
- One-on-one interviews with career counselors and guidance counselors are still to be conducted.
- Participants were randomly chosen from across the country and have diverse backgrounds, job histories and future aspirations.



General Attitudes Towards LTC



- Sentiment largely matches the broader public. There is some skepticism of the industry, but personal connections and a sense of duty can overcome this.
- Many feel a calling to care for the elderly and think of their own parents and grandparents.
- Current employees are seen as truth tellers and are our best recruiters.
- Developing long term relationships with residents is a selling point.
- Many see working in LTC as an attainable means of getting into health care.

What Appeals To Existing Staff

- **Family Aspect**

- Many workers go into LTC out of a personal and emotional connection to the work and, especially, the residents.
- One employee said, “I love old people ... it’s like having 85 grandparents.”
- There is a familial aspect to LTC that other health care settings can’t claim. Improving a resident’s care due to an established relationship is highly rewarding.

- **Career Entry Point**

- Many workers see LTC as an entry point to the broader healthcare workforce. Hospitals are more likely to require years of experience, so new workers turn to LTC first.

- **Autonomy and Experience**

- LTC staff believe they have more responsibility and independence than other healthcare workers and see that as a rewarding growth opportunity.

Make Staff Feel Appreciated

While many of the keys to retaining staff are obvious, four aspects stood out that were part of a broader theme – the desire to feel appreciated.

- 1) **Pay:** As in any career, pay was the most important factor to many. If another job is offering significantly more pay, it will be hard to turn down. But a focus on other areas, especially morale, can help overcome pay gaps.
- 2) **Patient-to-Staff Ratios:** Higher ratios leave existing workers feeling overburdened and under appreciated and prevent resident-staff relationship building.
- 3) **Flexibility in Scheduling:** Workers who are able to have input on their schedules and senior staff who are given more days off feel more valued. When possible, some may prefer longer but fewer shifts.
- 4) **Morale:** Staff want to hear affirmation from facility leadership. Things like handwritten notes and even simple stickers for good work can help boost morale.

How Applicants Look For New Jobs

- Online activity is at the heart of the job market – sites such as Indeed and Glassdoor. Candidates are also looking at CMS audits and reviews.
- They take negative staff reviews on sites such as Glassdoor with a grain of salt and appreciate facility responses.
- Scanning job listings is never ending. They are curious what's out there and are well versed in sifting through relevant info.
- Word of mouth is important. Staff learn about open positions from friends in other facilities and trust their input on the quality of a facility above all else.



How To Recruit Young Workers

- Find a way to get people in the door through various tactics:
 - Early career job that can provide tons of skills whether LTC is their final career destination or not
 - Emotional connection to provide care for “someone’s auntie, someone’s mom,” not everyone has grandkids, but you can be that for them
- Develop relationships with local community colleges and high schools so prospective employees are aware LTC opportunities prior to graduation.
- Use current employees as recruiters – offer referral bonuses and other incentives.
- Sell it as a good way to enter the health care workforce and the opportunity for future career growth that goes along with that.
- Actively monitor and engage on sites such as Glassdoor. If there is a negative review, provide a thoughtful response that shows you value staff input.

How To Recruit/Retain Veteran Workers

- Use new staff hiring as a way to communicate with existing staff (as well as residents and families) that you are working to bring down resident-to-staff ratios.
- Invest in intentional and regular affirmations of the staff and encourage families to report positive experiences.
- Don't underestimate the power of high (and low) morale. Money is not the only issue for staff. Actively show staff that morale is important.
- Allow for flexible scheduling when possible as another non-monetary way to reward staff. Look to give staff a voice – they want to feel heard.
- Again, remain active on sites such as Glassdoor. When you know staff are happy, encourage them to provide reviews on these sites so they can be seen by others.
- Similarly encourage staff to spread the word to their friends in other healthcare settings.

What's Next

- Following the career and guidance counselor interviews, AHCA/NCAL will develop a map that illustrates the process that leads people to career decisions, key decision points, trusted information sources and individuals, and messages.
- We want your feedback – what more could we do that would help you in your hiring efforts?
 - Would toolkits to engage local high schools and community colleges be helpful?
 - Would additional messaging guidance (talking points, Q&As, social media guidance, etc.) be helpful?
- We will continue to explore all options to help improve the hiring environment for LTC facilities across the country.



Thank You