

# Extra News Online

## Seven Tips For Improving Staff Satisfaction Retention Boosters That Work

Research has shown that improving employee satisfaction is highest when management demonstrates the following practices:

- Cares about employees
- Listens to employees
- Helps to reduce job stress
- Conducts fair evaluations
- Demands staff respect for residents
- Ensures the safety of the workplace
- Cares about employees as people

Following are some effective strategies that nursing facilities can implement in order to demonstrate these seven practices:

### 1. Care About Employees

- Praise and recognize staff in public. Counsel and coach the staff in private.
- Provide quality education and in-services that incorporate the principles of adult education. Use data to drive the education agenda, and use employees with subject matter expertise to participate in the training.
- Ensure that employees' schedules are honored. Notify employees well ahead of time if their schedules and assignments need to be changed to meet organizational needs.
- Be transparent and share all data with staff—clinical outcomes, satisfaction survey results, occupancy trends, and financial results.
- Examine ways to make health and dental insurance more affordable for employees.
- Offer staff a no-interest emergency loan program. Designate a committee of their peers to review each emergency loan application.
- Make clear investments in employee safety. Ensure that enough properly

working patient lifts are available and staff are trained in their use.

- Bring staff together regularly and engage them in relationship-building exercises.

### 2. Listen To Employees

- Regularly measure and take action on staff satisfaction survey results. Share results with staff, and celebrate successes and improvements.
- Have facility leaders adopt an open door policy but recognize that most staff will not walk into a manager's office unless invited. Leaders need to get out among the staff in order to maximize their efforts to listen to staff.
- Consider the use of an employee newsletter or Web page to promote management and staff communication.
- Create consistent, formal, structured systems to receive employee insights and feedback, such as learning circles, community and/or neighborhood meetings, regular employee satisfaction surveys, and suggestion boxes.
- Facilitate a process to have certified nurse assistants (CNAs) attend and participate in resident-care conference meetings.
- Ask employees about their equipment and supply needs, and act on the information they share. Always get back to them, and let them know what you did or will do to make sure they have the right equipment to do their job well.

### 3. Reduce Employee Stress

- Decrease institutional noise pollution. Pay attention to the excessive use of the overhead paging system, and take steps to minimize its use. Tip: Turn the

overhead paging system off for one day, and work with the staff to find a quieter way to communicate with one another.

- Address and take appropriate action with negative staff members who are contributing to their co-workers' job stress.
- Experiment with creative staffing configurations, such as spa aides, additional activity staff, and ward clerks, to take stress off of nursing staff. Consider adding a concierge position at peak times in order to serve new admissions and their families, answer call lights, make beds, deliver nourishment, and so forth.
- Reduce understaffed shifts. Explain to the staff that efforts are being made behind the scenes to prevent understaffed shifts and how they can assist.
- Offer wellness programs for staff, such as smoking cessation classes, discount memberships to the local health club, or 15-minute massage therapist sessions for staff.
- Upgrade the employee lounge, and create an area of peace, sanctuary, and quiet.
- Provide a safe way for employees to remove themselves from problem situations when stress becomes overwhelming.

### 4. Conduct Fair Performance Evaluations

- Ensure that all job descriptions are up to date and in alignment with a valid, credible performance evaluation tool.
- Educate staff regarding how they are being evaluated and what the different performance categories and ratings address within the performance review

tool.

- Complete evaluations on time.

An effective strategy to stay on top of getting the evaluations done is to announce upcoming employee anniversaries at every management meeting with a gentle reminder that their evaluation is due.

- Allow every employee the opportunity to complete a self-evaluation before the performance review meeting, and discuss it with the employee.

- The reviewer's approach going into the review should be to coach, build the employee's self esteem, and move the employee closer to their potential. Conduct the review as an exchange of information, not as a report card.

- Follow a performance review model: Review the past (20 percent of discussion), analyze the present (30 percent of discussion), and plan the future (50 percent of discussion).

- During the review, ask probing questions and promote self-discovery. Ask, "What do you like the most about your job?" and "What frustrates you here?" Disagreements should be addressed through discussion and concessions by both parties.

## 5. Treat Residents With Respect

- Consider implementing consistent assignment and abandoning the practice of rotating staff assignments.

- Educate staff regarding why they should make the effort to form relationships with the residents and the families and how such relationships ultimately make their job of caring for the residents easier and more meaningful.

- Embrace person-centered care, and begin the process of transforming the

entire organization toward a person-centered care model.

- Offer multiple opportunities for staff to learn how to deal with difficult resident behaviors.

- Treat the staff with respect. The staff will, in turn, treat the residents in the same manner that they are treated.

- Educate the staff on the leadership's philosophy regarding respect for residents, families, staff, and visitors. Consider respect as a core value of the facility, and promote it at every opportunity.

- Ensure that the facility enforces strict policies and practices of respect shown to residents and family members.

## 6. Ensure Workplace Safety

- Make sure all staff clearly understand the facility's goal to keep everyone safe. Regularly discuss workplace safety at every general staff meeting.

- Establish an active safety committee. Include all disciplines and levels of staff as members of the committee. At meetings report all incidents involving residents, visitors, or employees.

- Have employees of the safety committee participate in safety rounds, and help them to learn to identify and report unsafe practices and working conditions. Teach them how to intervene without causing ill will among the staff.

- Ensure that parking lots are well lit during the evening, and consider providing escorts for employees to their vehicles.

- Have a patient lift company do an organizational analysis of the facility, and map out how to improve lift use.

- Consistently communicate through

written word your commitment to keep staff safe through regular education.

- Have safety contests, and provide rewards to staff for working a specific number of days without incurring a lost-time work injury.

## 7. Recognize Staff As People

- Hold regular meetings with staff to inform, educate, and listen. Charge nurses should deliver a report to the CNAs at the beginning of their shift and hold a short "huddle" meeting at the end of the shift.

- Write personal thank you notes when staff members go beyond the call of duty.

- Always monitor workflow, and step in to assist staff when help is needed. Charge nurses should provide regular, positive feedback to the CNAs.

- Consistently follow up when a staff member returns from being out ill to let the staff member know that they are concerned for their welfare and that the staff member was missed.

- Write personal cards to staff on birthdays and employment anniversaries. When a CNA is celebrating a joyful event in their life, the charge nurse could help organize a "pot luck" get together for the employee.

- Hold occasional appreciation gatherings for the department, and have cake, pizza, or other treats.

- Recognize and post achievements of units, teams, and departments so that residents, visitors, and co-workers can see them.

*Source: The American Health Care Association Workforce Recruitment Toolkit, 2009, and My InnerView, Wasau, Wis.*