

**FINDINGS OF THE NCAL 2009 ASSISTED LIVING STAFF  
VACANCY, RETENTION AND TURNOVER SURVEY**



**October  
2010**

**A NCAL study with collaboration from AAHSA, ASHA, and ALFA**



## **ABSTRACT**

The overall retention rate for assisted living employees was 51 percent. Retention rates among Resident Caregivers (non-certified), Certified Nurse Assistants, and Medication Aides ranged from 44 to 55 percent. The turnover rate for all assisted living employees was 38 percent. The turnover rate for Resident Caregivers (non-certified) remains higher than all other nursing care staff, at 46 percent. The turnover rate for Administrator/Executive Director was the lowest among all Assisted Living employees, at 13 percent. The turnover rate for Staff Registered Nurse was 22 percent, the lowest among nursing staff,

### **National Center for Assisted Living**

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## 1.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) conducted a nationwide assisted living survey, which collected 2009 data to estimate the retention, vacancy and turnover rates of employees who worked for assisted living communities. This study was supported by the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA), the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA), and the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA).

*The 2009 Assisted Living Staff Vacancy, Retention and Turnover Survey* is the first nationwide study to collect retention, vacancy and turnover information among assisted living employees of five major job categories and more than fourteen job positions – including administrative and management staff (Administrator/ Executive Director, Office Manager, etc.), nursing staff (Director of Nursing/ Wellness and Director of Resident Services, Staff Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Certified Nurse Assistant, Non-Certified Resident Caregiver, Medication Aide, etc.), food services staff (Dietician Director/Head Chef and Dietician Aide/Dining Staff), housekeeping and maintenance staff (Housekeeper and Maintenance Worker), and social activities staff (Director of Activities and Activity Staff). The survey questionnaire had been available on the NCAL web site for all eligible assisted living communities in the United States. More than 600 assisted living communities nationwide participated in this survey.

In this report, we presented results on two aggregated levels: job category and job position. Retention rate, vacancy rate and turnover rate for all five job categories (see Table 1) were reported. We also reported results for selected job positions, particularly for all major nursing staff positions. Data for some job positions were insufficient for analysis. To ensure the reliability of the data, frequency distributions were examined and data was omitted from the analysis where individual responses were out of range or a combination of responses were deemed implausible through contingency checks.

All retention, vacancy and turnover rates are presented in this report as percentages. Retention rates were calculated by dividing the total number of employees who had worked in the assisted living community for 12 months or longer as of December 31, 2009 by the total number of employees during calendar year 2009. Vacancy rates were calculated by dividing the total number of vacancies as of December 31, 2009 by the total number of established positions as of December 31, 2009. Turnover rates were calculated by dividing the total number of terminations in 2009 by the total number of employees as of December 31, 2009 (see Appendix).

In 2009, nursing staff constructed the largest portion (or 58 percent) of entire assisted living staff (figure 1). Among nursing staff, 47 percent of them were Non-Certified Resident Caregivers (figure 2).

Figure 1 Percentage Breakdown of Total Assisted Living Employees by Job Category, 2009

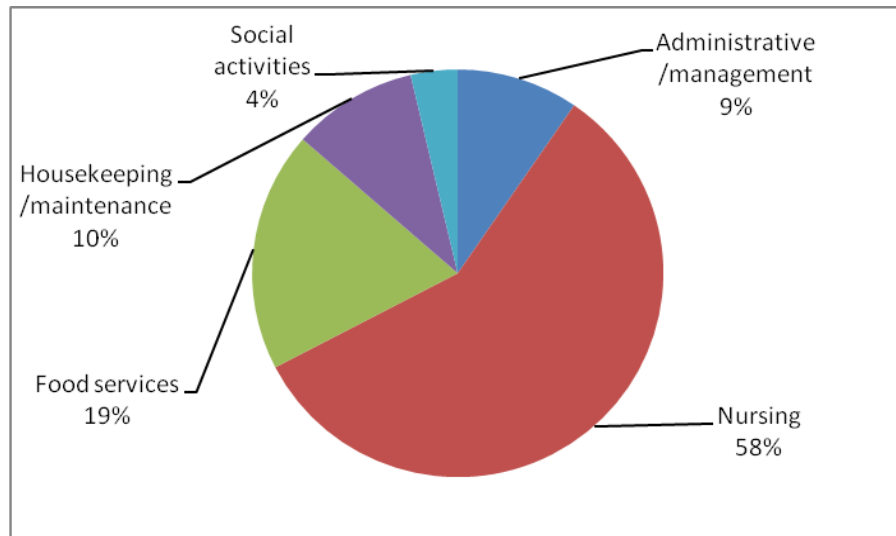
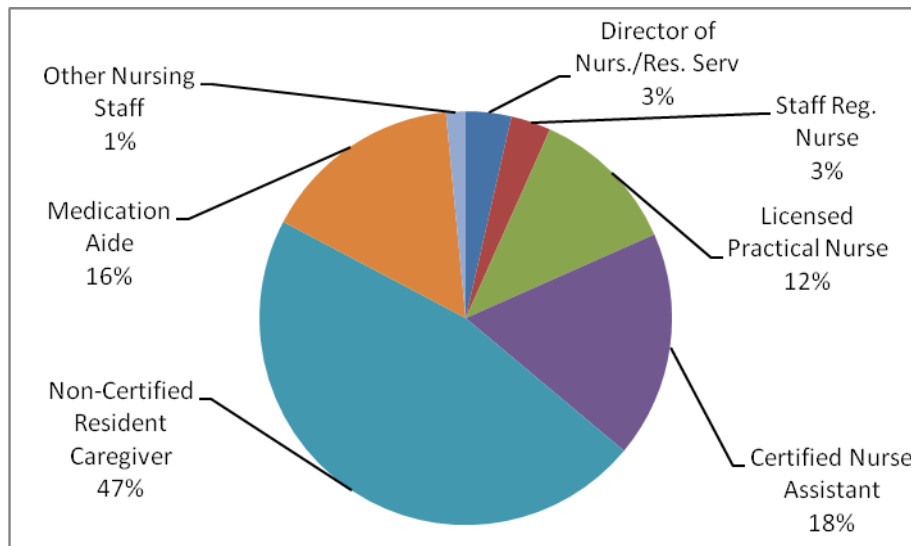


Table 1 Assisted Living Job Category and Job Position

Assisted Living Job Category	Assisted Living Job Position
<b>Administrative &amp; Management</b>	Administrator/Executive Director
	Director of Marketing
	Other Office Staff
<b>Nursing</b>	Director of Nursing (DON)/Wellness & Director of Resident Services
	Staff Registered Nurse (RN)
	Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
	Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)
	Resident Caregiver (non-certified)
	Medication Aide
	Other Nursing Staff
<b>Food Services</b>	Dietician Director/Head Chef
	Dietician Aide/Dining Staff
<b>Housekeeping &amp; Maintenance</b>	Housekeeper
	Maintenance Worker
<b>Social Activities</b>	Director of Activities
	Activity Staff

Figure 2 Percentage Breakdown of Nursing Staff by Job Positions, 2009



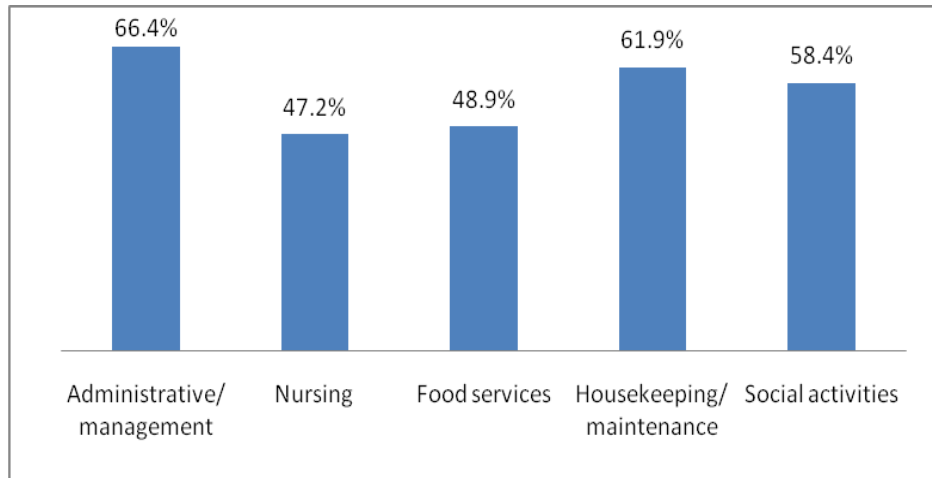
2.

**RETENTION, VACANCY AND TURNOVER OF FIVE JOB CATEGORIES  
IN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES**

**Retention Rates**

The retention rate indicates a sense of the stability of the staff. In 2009, the retention rate for all assisted living employees was 50.9 percent. As shown in Figure 3, retention rates ranged from 47 to 66 percent across all major assisted living job categories. The nursing staff’s retention rate was the lowest among all job categories.

Figure 3 Assisted Living Employee Retention Rates by Job Category, 2009



### Vacancy Rates

Generally, vacancy rates were low across all major assisted living job categories. As shown in Figure 4, vacancy rates were highest among social activity staff (1.9 percent) and lowest for administrative and housekeeping/maintenance staff (0.7 percent).

### Turnover Rates

The turnover rate for all assisted living employees was 38.3 percent. Turnover rates exhibited a high degree of variability across assisted living job categories. As shown in Figure 5 (on the next page), turnover rates were particularly high for food services and nursing staff (45.8 and 40.9 percent, respectively), and were lowest for administrative /management staff (20.6 percent).

Figure 4 Vacancy Rates by Assisted Living Job Categories, 2009

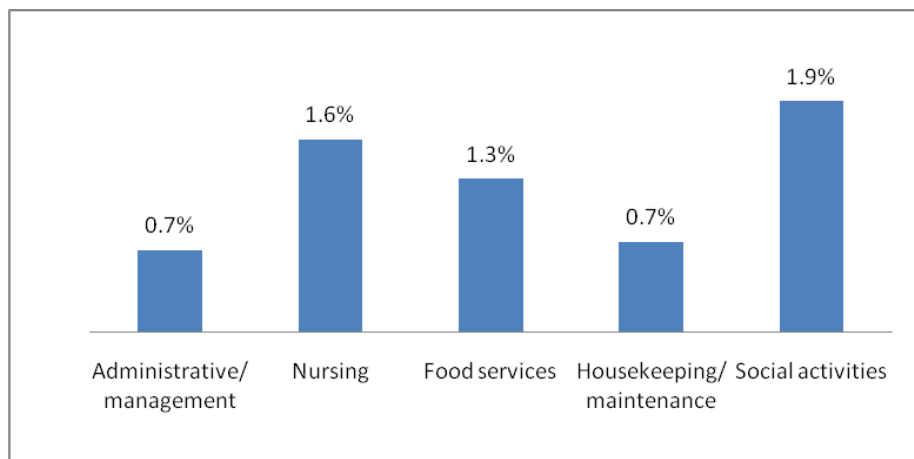
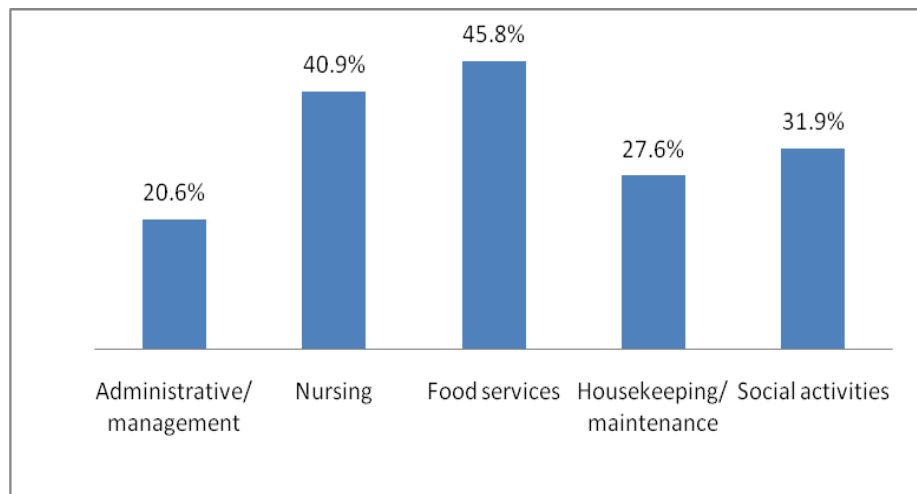


Figure 5 Turnover Rates by Assisted Living Job Categories, 2009



### 3.

## RETENTION, VACANCY AND TURNOVER OF NURSING STAFF IN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES

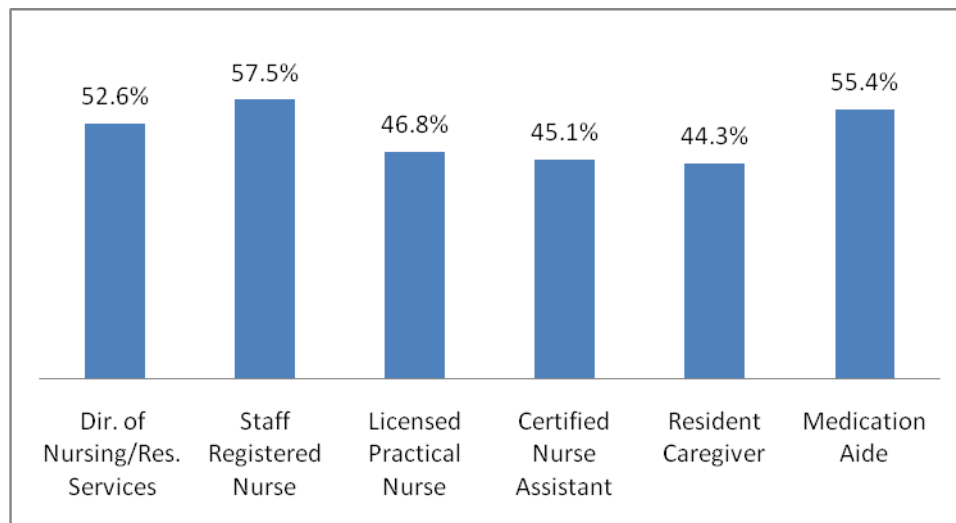
### Retention Rates of Nursing Staff

In 2009, the overall retention rate for all nursing staff was 47.2 percent. The retention rate of nursing staff was the lowest among all assisted living employees.

Retention rates exhibited moderate variability across the nursing job positions. As shown in Figure 6, retention rates were highest for Staff Registered Nurses (57.5 percent) and lowest among Non-Certified Resident Caregivers (44.3 percent). The relatively low level of retention among nursing staff illustrated the difficulty that assisted living communities had in retaining direct care staff.



Figure 6 Nursing Staff Retention Rates by Job Positions, 2009



### Vacancy Rates of Nursing Staff

Although the overall vacancy rate for nursing staff was only 1.6 percent, vacancy rates exhibited a high degree of variability across major nursing job positions. As shown in Figure 7, vacancy rates were highest among Licensed Practical Nurses (4.3 percent) and lowest for Staff Registered Nurses (0.9 percent). Except for Staff Registered Nurses, vacancy rates also remained relatively high for Non-Certified Resident Caregivers, Certified Nurse Assistant, and Medication Aide (3.3, 2.9, and 2.8 percent respectively). Meanwhile, vacancy rates for the Director of Nursing/Wellness/Resident Services was at 1.8 percent.

### Turnover Rates of Nursing Staff

Overall turnover rate of nursing staff, at 40.9 percent, was one of the highest among all assisted living employees.

As shown in Table 7, turnover rates were particularly high among Non-Certified Resident Caregivers (46.4 percent), Certified Nurse Assistants (44.6 percent), and Director of Nursing/Wellness and Director of Resident Services (41.1 percent). The turnover rate for Staff Registered Nurses was only 22.3 percent.

Figure 7 Nursing Staff Vacancy Rates by Job Positions, 2009

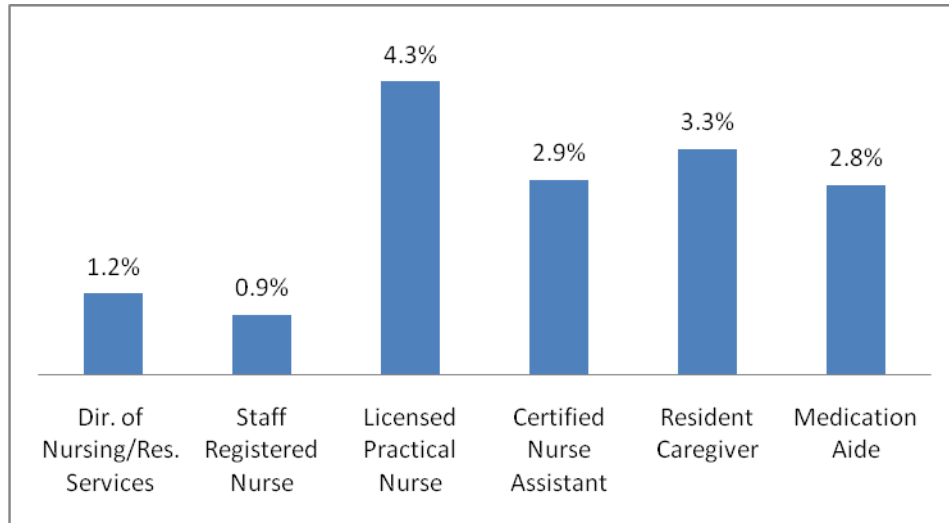
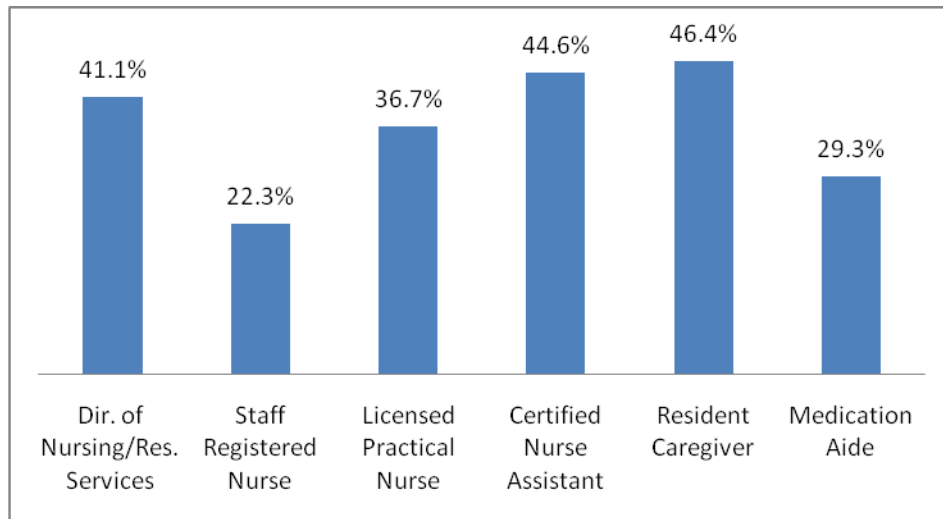


Figure 8 Nursing Staff Turnover Rates by Job Positions, 2009



## 4.

### RETENTION, VACANCY AND TURNOVER OF OTHER EMPLOYEES IN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES

Although nursing staff comprises the majority of total employees of assisted living communities, other employees, including administrative and management staff, food services staff, housekeeping and maintenance staff, and social activity staff also make necessary contributions to provide resident care.

Table 2 Retention, Turnover, and Vacancy Rates by Selected Assisted Living Positions, 2009

Assisted Living Job Category	Assisted Living Job Position	Retention Rate	Turnover Rate	Vacancy Rate
Administrative & Management	Administrator/Executive Director	78.7%	12.5%	0.6%
	Director of Marketing	44.1%	19.4%	3.3%
	Other Office Staff	66.1%	24.2%	1.2%
Food services	Dietician Director/Head Chef	69.7%	20.1%	1.2%
	Dietician Aide/Dining Staff	46.6%	49.3%	2.3%
Housekeeping & Maintenance	Housekeeper	60.9%	27.9%	0.8%
	Maintenance Worker	64.2%	26.7%	0.7%
Social Activities	Director of Activities	69.0%	15.1%	1.4%
	Activity Staff	53.6%	41.3%	2.2%

#### Administrative and Management Staff

The retention rate for all administrative and management staff was 66.4 percent, the highest among all assisted living employees. The vacancy rate was low for administrative and management staff, at 0.7 percent. The overall turnover rate for administrative and management staff was 20.6 percent.

#### Food Services Staff

The overall retention rate for food services staff was 48.9 percent, the second lowest next to nursing staff. The vacancy rate for Dietician Aide/Dining Staff was 2.3 percent. The turnover rate of Dietician Aide/Dining Staff was 49.3 percent, the highest for all assisted living job positions.

### **Housekeeping and Maintenance Staff**

The retention rate for housekeeping and maintenance staff was 61.9 percent, the second highest for all assisted living job categories after administrative and management staff. Overall vacancy rates also remained as low as administrative and management staff, at 0.7 percent. The overall turnover rate for housekeeping and maintenance staff was 27.6 percent.

### **Social Activity Staff**

The retention rate for social activities staff was 58.4 percent, the third highest among all assisted living employees. The overall vacancy rate for social activities staff was 1.9 percent. Although the overall turnover rate for Social Activities Staff was 31.9 percent, turnover rate for Activity Staff was 41.3, the second highest among all non-direct-care assisted living employees after Dietician Aide/Dining Staff.

## 5.

### DISCUSSION

Since the health care reform law is bringing greater attention to health care workforce issues, having up-to-date, accurate, and consistent data about the long-term care workforce is even more critical. NCAL conducted the *2009 Assisted Living Staff Vacancy, Retention and Turnover Survey* to meet this advocacy demand. NCAL thanks the other provider associations, AAHSA, ASHA, and ALFA, who supported this study.

The findings from the 2009 NCAL survey of assisted living staff indicate that many assisted living job positions experience high level of turnover and low level of retention, especially for direct residential care positions, such as Licensed Practical Nurse, Certified Nurse Assistant, and Non-Certified Resident Caregiver.

Due to the limited numbers of participants in this study, the findings of this study should not be considered as conclusive as some other prior studies. **The statistics presented in this report may or may not reflect national trends but is intended to offer a snapshot in time and to be used as foundational data for future surveys.**

Comparison with available staff statistics generated from the American Health Care Association's 2008 nursing facility employee survey provides some evidence that the sample of this study is representative. Some relevant statistics from the two studies were almost identical. The retention rate for administrative staff in nursing facilities is 67.2 percent, compared to 66.4 percent in assisted living; the retention rate for nursing staff in nursing facilities was 44.8 percent, compared to 47.2 percent in assisted living; the retention rate for housekeeping was 59.6 percent in nursing facilities, compared to 61.9 percent in assisted living. The turnover rate for administrative and food service staff in nursing facilities constitute 22.1 percent and 47.3 respectively, compared to 20.6 percent and 45.8 percent in assisted living.

High quality assisted living services depend upon a stable, well-trained workforce. Promoting sound fiscal policies, designed to strengthen America's long term care workforce and facilitate the continuing improvement in quality of residential care, is imperative and should be a top national priority.

## Appendix

A sample of NCAL 2009 Assisted Living Staff Vacancy, Retention and Turnover Survey

**2009 ASSISTED LIVING STAFF VACANCY, RETENTION AND TURNOVER SURVEY ©**

The National Center for Assisted Living is conducting this survey to better describe the vacancy, retention and turnover of assisted living staff. Results of this survey will be reported in aggregate form only. Data will be kept confidential. Your community will not be identified in any way.

.....  
 Community Name: .....  
 Address: .....  
 City: .....  
 State: .....  
 ZIP Code: .....  
 Optional Contact: .....  
 Phone: .....

Please mail or fax your completed survey to:

2009 Assisted Living Staff Survey  
 National Center for Assisted Living,  
 1201 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005  
 Main Fax: 202-842-3860

For general questions, please call Shelley Sabo at (202) 898-2848; For technical questions, send an email to [research@ncahca.org](mailto:research@ncahca.org)

THANK YOU!

Please see reverse side for detailed instructions

Assisted Living Job Category	Assisted Living Job Position	Please insert data as of December 31, 2009		
		A Total number of CURRENT employees	B Total number of VACANT positions	C Total number of employees who had worked in the community for 12 months or longer
		D Total number of employees during year 2009		
		2009		
Administrative & management	1 Administrator/Executive Director			
	2 Director of Marketing			
	3 Other Office Staff			
Nursing	4 Director of Nursing (DON)/Wellness & Director of Resident Services			
	5 Staff Registered Nurse (RN)			
	6 Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)			
	7 Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)			
	8 Resident Caregiver (non-certified)			
	9 Medication Aide			
Food services	10 Other Nursing Staff			
	11 Dietician Director/Head Chef			
Housekeeping & maintenance	12 Dietician Aide/Dining Staff			
	13 Housekeeper			
	14 Maintenance Worker			
Social activities	15 Director of Activities			
	16 Activity Staff			
Other	17			



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