

## Change Ideas for Orientation

### Typical issues & evidence of discordance:

- New nursing assistants picking up undesirable work habits from their peers rather than following facility protocol
- Nursing assistants using care methods or espousing philosophies that were learned at an old job and that don't jibe with expectations at the new one
- Nursing assistants being given responsibility for patient care before they feel ready to handle it
- Low morale among newly hired nursing assistants
- High turnover rates during the first six months of employment

### Barriers:

- Employers with vacant nursing assistant positions to fill often hesitate to lengthen orientation beyond two or three days
- Fulfilling detailed regulatory requirements and filling out the associated paperwork often occupies all the time allotted to orientation
- Employers believe the job is easy, so new nursing assistants don't need added supports and on-the-job training to solidify skills
- Employers don't see value of peer-to-peer education

### Goal:

- To teach new nursing assistants about the organization's culture and values
- To ensure that new nursing assistants understand the facility's mission and values as well as its policies, procedures, and protocols
- To initiate and nurture relationships between new workers and the residents, supervisors, and peers they will be working with
- To reinforce new care giving skills among nursing assistants who have just completed training.

### Infrastructure helpful to support the change:

- Extend orientation to last at least a week. Don't require new nursing assistants to carry a full patient care load during that time.
- Institute a peer mentor or buddy program

### Measurement possibilities:

- Survey or informally interview newly hired nursing assistants soon after their first week to learn how confident they feel in doing their jobs, how well they understand the organization's mission and values, and how well they are relating to residents, coworkers, and supervisors. Talk to their peer mentors and supervisors to see if their observations back up what the nursing assistants say.
- Measure turnover during first three months to see if new orientation program reduces loss of new nursing assistants.

**PDSA Cycles:**

PLAN: Determine what is and is not working about your current orientation program, with input from some of your most successful and some of your newest nursing assistants.

DO: Design a new orientation program that lasts at least a week. Emphasize organizational values and communication with residents and other workers as well as policies and procedures. Include frequent check-ins by peer mentors and supervisors. Consider having new aides shadow peer mentors before taking on their own caseload.

STUDY: Check in with newly hired nursing assistants and their peer mentors and supervisors to see how they're adjusting to the organization and the job.

ACT: Based on the feedback from nursing assistants, mentors and supervisors, make changes to the orientation program as necessary

**Questions to consider:**

- Do we make our new nursing assistants feel welcome?
- Do we ask nursing assistants to handle a full workload before they feel ready?
- How do new nursing assistants learn about our organizational mission and values?
- Do our new nursing assistants have someone they feel comfortable approaching when they have a question or need advice or support?
- If a new nursing assistant did something that didn't jibe with our facility's protocols or philosophy, would someone notice and correct the behavior before it became a habit?

**Change Ideas:**

- Teach newly hired nursing assistants about your organization's culture and values -- things like the value placed on teamwork, what is meant by resident-centered care and how that plays out in the workplace, and how staff treat each other, residents, and residents' family members.
- Encourage supervisors to check in frequently with new workers during this period and offer support and advice, laying the groundwork for a positive and trusting relationship.
- Assign each new nursing assistant a peer mentor.
- Have new hires shadow experienced workers and assist them with some of the easier tasks for a few days before giving them their own workloads.
- Establish clear expectations for what nursing assistants are expected to achieve during their first three months on the job if they are to move from probationary to permanent employment. Create checklists so supervisors or peer mentors can check off each goal as it is accomplished. Have each worker review his or her checklist with his or her supervisor at the end of the first three months.

**Resources:**

For descriptions of successful peer mentoring programs, go to <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/practices/index.jsp> and select "peer-mentoring"

A curriculum for teaching a peer mentor program will be available from the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute as of fall or winter 2005. To order a copy, go to <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org> or e-mail [info@directcareclearinghouse.org](mailto:info@directcareclearinghouse.org)