

Change Ideas for Recruitment and Screening

Typical issues & evidence of discordance:

- High turnover rates among nursing assistants in nursing homes, especially during their first six months on the job
- Damage to staff morale and added stress due to nursing assistants who may complain constantly, “call out” frequently, or refuse to pitch in when their colleagues need help
- Strained or distant relationships between residents and nursing assistants
- Resident abuse or neglect

Barriers:

- Widespread negative perceptions of long-term care in general and direct-care work in particular discourage many qualified candidates from considering it.
- Some facility managers assume that nursing assistant jobs are unskilled positions that anyone “off the street” can fill, and therefore fail to screen for attributes linked to success on the job.
- The need to fill vacant positions as quickly as possible creates pressure to hire the first available “warm body.”

Goal:

- To slow down the revolving door among nursing assistants in nursing homes.
- To build a stable and qualified nursing assistant workforce so residents can maintain the personal relationships with caregivers that enrich their lives and lead to higher quality, more personalized care.
- To eliminate the strain created for a facility’s most dedicated nursing assistants when they must help train a constant flow of new employees and “work short” or put in unwanted overtime to cover for vacant positions.

Infrastructure helpful to support the change:

- Form an interdisciplinary recruitment committee including several of your most successful nursing assistants and some of your residents

Measurement possibilities:

- Track turnover and retention rates.
- Keep track of how long individual workers stay, their job performance and reasons for leaving, and how they were recruited to see which of your recruitment methods is yielding the best results.
- Conduct exit interviews with departing nursing assistants, mixing open-ended, preferably oral questions with written questions that ask respondents to rate various factors on a scale of one to five to learn why people leave.
- Poll residents at intervals to determine whether relationships with direct-care staff are improving or remaining good

PDSA Cycles:

PLAN: Engage an interdisciplinary team, including several senior nursing assistants and residents, to create a profile of your ideal nursing assistant candidate and conduct an active search for people who fit the profile.

DO: Create questions and an interview process (including input from senior nursing assistants and residents) aimed at identifying the traits you are looking for. Post flyers in likely spots and build relationships with people at likely organizations in the community to encourage referrals.

STUDY: Track turnover and retention rates to see if they improve. Every three to 12 months, depending on the size of your organization, look at who has left, taking into account their job performance and reason for leaving as well as how they were recruited, to determine whether your recruitment methods are working.

ACT: Adjust your methods as needed to drop efforts that are not bringing you good candidates and step up or improve efforts that are working.

Questions to consider:

- What traits and skills do our most successful nursing assistants have in common?
- What traits and skills do our least successful nursing assistants have in common?
- How did our most successful nursing assistants hear about our organization and/or the job?
- What do our most successful nursing assistants like most about their work? About working for us?
- Is there anything we could change to make our organization or our nursing assistant jobs more appealing to the candidates we want to attract?
- Are there populations in our community that might be a source of candidates but that we have not reached in the past?
- Are there organizations in our community that could potentially work as partners with us, referring appropriate candidates for training and jobs?

Change Ideas:

- Create a profile of your ideal nursing assistant candidate, enlisting the help of some of your most successful nursing assistants.
- Make sure everyone in your organization who has contact with job candidates can clearly and concisely describe the qualifications you're looking for.
- Ask successful employees for referrals. Consider paying a stipend for any referral that results in an interview and/or a successful hire.
- Write a Help Wanted ad that stresses the aspects of the work and of your organization that are most likely to appeal to the kind of person you want to attract.
- Create a flyer or brochure that includes your ad, nursing assistant salary range, and contact information. Post it in laundromats, childcare centers, houses of worship, community colleges and other places likely to attract the kind of people you're looking for.
- Talk to staff at places of worship, human services organizations, immigration aid groups and other faith- and community-based organizations where likely candidates for nursing assistant training receive services or volunteer their time. Do the same at local Red Cross, community college and other nursing assistant training programs. Make sure they know about your organization and ask them to refer likely candidates to you. Follow up periodically with each of these contacts to see if they have anyone to send your way.
- Enlist senior nursing assistants to be part of the interview process, so they can give candidates a realistic idea of the job and offer management their assessment of who is likely to be successful.
- Enlist residents to be part of the interview process to get their perspective on

candidates

- When interviewing candidates, ask questions that reveal how they think, how they would handle the responsibilities of the job, and how they would interact with residents, coworkers, and family members. To test for literacy skills, ask some questions in writing and require written answers.
- When interviewing candidates without nursing assistant experience, give them exposure to the job in a realistic but positive way, to give both them and you a better sense of whether they are suited for the work. You might ask them to shadow one of your senior nursing assistants for part of a day, or show them a video about the work (see Resources).

Resources:

Caregiver Assessment Guide (attached)

Finding and Keeping Direct-Care Staff. The Catholic Health Association of the United States and the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, 2003. Available free of charge at <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/FindKeepBook.pdf>

Recruiting Quality Health Care Paraprofessionals. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute. 2000. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute. Available free of charge at <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/download/PHIRecruitOvrvw.pdf>

The right people for the job: Recruiting direct-care workers for home- and community-based care. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and MEDSTAT. Fall 2002. Workforce Tools, Vol. 1, No.1. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Available free of charge at http://www.paraprofessional.org/publications/WorkforceTools_Vol1No1.pdf

Videos can be useful in interviewing would-be nursing assistants who have not yet done the work. Watching realistic depictions of the work may help some realize that they aren't suited to the profession – or make that fact clear to recruiters who watch them as they watch the videos. Videos also raise issues that interviewers can discuss to learn more about how a job candidate thinks.

- *HeartWork: A Video Celebrating the Lives and Work of Direct-Care Workers.* Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, 2002. Comes with a discussion guide that offers suggestions on how to use it with various audiences, including new recruits. To order, go to <http://www.paraprofessional.org/Sections/resources.htm#videos>, e-mail info@directcareclearinghouse.org, or call 718-402-4138.
- *Career in Caring.* Iowa Caregivers Association, 2002. To order, e-mail iowacga@aol.com, call 515-241-8697, or send \$60 to Iowa Caregivers Association, 1117 Pleasant Street, Suite 221, Des Moines, IA 50309.
- *Voices from the Trenches: The world of the certified nursing assistant.* Wiland-Bell Productions, 2003. To order, go to Aquarius Health Care Videos at <http://www.aquariusproductions.com> and Click on Care giving for Professionals.
- The U.S. Department of Labor houses free videos describing the work of nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants on a Web site devoted to career information. To access the videos, go to <http://www.careervoyages.gov/healthcare-videos.cfm>