

2020 Guide **McKnight's** **Workforce** **Development**

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Long-Term Care News & Senior Living

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Attracting and keeping talent today requires a multifaceted approach

By Amy Novotney

Long-term care is an industry rife with hiring challenges. Thanks to a strong economy as of early this year, employers faced workforce shortages and difficulties in finding, recruiting and retaining staff across the care continuum. And demographic trends, including a rapidly aging population and fewer people of working age, point to an ongoing demand for employees in senior living and skilled nursing.

In fact, new data on future hiring demands in long-term care show that from 2018 to 2028, the industry's frontline workforce will add 1.3 million jobs, and an additional 6.9 million jobs will become vacant as existing workers leave the field or exit the labor force.

"What has been called a crisis for many years in terms of workforce issues is now an emergency," says Kezia Scales, Ph.D., PHI's director of policy research. "This is something that administrators are challenged by every day."

The biggest need is for direct care workers — formally classified as personal care aides, home health aides and nursing assistants, but known in the field by a much broader array of job titles. The tasks they perform are critical to the lives of millions of Americans but can take their toll on employees, notes Kathy Douglas, clinical consultant, ABILITY Network,



Photo: sturly/E+/Getty Images Plus

Low unemployment has meant that long-term care has had to be creative about attracting and retaining workers.

an Inovalon company.

"I don't think we talk enough about the deep human work these individuals are doing and how hard it is," Douglas says. "They are supporting people through what is often one of the most difficult times of their lives."

This provides even more reason for administrators to take steps now to employ new recruitment and retention approaches.

Cast a wider net

One of the first steps in meeting the demand for more direct care workers will be revising the recruitment process within long-term care, Scales says.

"There's a growing rec-

ognition that the stronger the recruitment process, the better the retention outcomes," she says.

Employers must start casting a wider net for potential recruits and consider ways to attract younger workers and older workers considering a second

career, as well as more men. Additional potential workers include nontraditional populations such as displaced workers from retail or manufacturing, as well as immigrants and refugees.

Susan Hildebrandt, vice president of workforce initiatives at LeadingAge, an association for nonprofit providers, notes that

94.7M

49.2M

A GROWING COHORT

From 2016 to 2060, the population of adults ages 65 and older — who comprise 83% of the nursing home resident population — will nearly double, from 49.2 million to 94.7 million.

— U.S. Nursing Assistants Employed in Nursing Homes: Key Facts, PHI, 2019

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

foreign-born individuals represent a significant segment of the long-term services and supports workforce and are likely essential to meet current and future demand.

Employing immigrant workers helps build a culturally competent system of care to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse consumer population, she notes.

“Many of the people who come to aging services from ‘nontraditional’ areas, whether as refugees or from sectors in upheaval, tell us how rewarding and meaningful these jobs are because of the community and relationship-building aspects,” Hildebrandt says. “They feel fortunate to work in an area they didn’t necessarily expect to work in.”

Similarly, broadening the pipeline of talent via internships and partnerships with institutions of higher learning is another strategy for helping long-term care employers meet the demand for caregivers.

For instance, senior living community Maple Knoll Communities in Cincinnati partners with University of Cincinnati to offer paid and unpaid internships to students from medicine, nursing, allied health, engineering and other disciplines.

“We are hoping to bring more excitement and change how students feel older adults age and hopefully draw them into this field,” says Megan Ulrich, vice president of Maple Knoll Communities.

Further, Atlanta-based CCRC Lenbrook developed a high school internship program in partnership with Cristo Del Rey Atlanta, part of a network of 32 independent Catholic high schools in 21 states serv-



ing students from economically disadvantaged communities. Students work one day a week at Lenbrook in a variety of areas, from marketing to recreation/enrichment and hospitality, and attend class four days a week.

Residents also play a part: On “Mentoring Mondays,” students are paired up and have lunch with residents, who have had a variety of careers and provide guidance, encouragement and advice, Hildebrandt says.

Support worker success

A tight labor market means job seekers typically have an array of choices, so employers must consider various approaches to stay competitive. “The most obvious element of that is wages and that they are commensurate with the competencies required of direct care workers today,” Hildebrandt says.

Because this group is “notoriously and persistently low paid,” it’s important to think about options for increasing base wages so that workers are actually earning a living wage, Scales says. This can include providing employer-sponsored health and dental insurance, paid time off and benefits around transportation or childcare, she says.

And while pay is important, to be sure, LeadingAge researchers Robyn Stone, DrPH, and Natasha Bryant have found that compensation is not necessarily the primary reason direct care workers leave a job. Other factors, such as feeling a lack of respect from supervisors or having inconsistent assignments may result in a departure, while benefits such as health insurance, a supervisor they respect and a positive work environment may help with retention.

“Employers who are sensitive to employees’ needs — financial and otherwise, from on-the-job support and ensuring a healthy workplace environment, to life benefits — will likely have greater success with retention,” Bryant says.

Cross-generational dialogue

It’s impossible to address the direct worker shortage without acknowledging the influx of millennials and Gen Zs in the workplace, Douglas says.

“These generations are more inclined to change jobs frequently, so if we don’t look carefully at how they change the dynamics of the workplace the problem will be even more exacerbated,” she says.

She recommends that administrators ensure multi-generational representation in workgroups. Douglas also encourages leaders to find themselves a “millennial mentor” to help them better understand their workforce.

And in the same vein, younger workers have an expectation that their work will involve the use of modern technologies, Scales says. For example, social media can help facilities reach younger populations for recruiting purposes, and automated scheduling programs can help improve retention by making schedules more transparent.

While adding a new technology is time-consuming, it is worth it, Douglas says. “You can’t solve today’s challenges with yesterday’s tools,” she says. “We really need to encourage administrators not to be afraid of adopting new technologies and to take advantage of their potential to improve worker satisfaction.” ■

Wages, unfilled job openings rise in expanding assisted living sector

By Kimberly Marselas

Assisted living providers are continuing to grapple with wage pressure. This is happening even as many positions remain unfilled and consumers' ability to pay is expected to shrink.

Salaries and hourly wage increases for assisted living workers outpaced those in other senior care sectors last year, according to several recent studies that cite a robust economy and nonhealthcare competition as major drivers.

Annual pay for assisted living administrators averaged \$100,622 in 2019, an increase of 3.6% over 2018, according to the annual "Assisted Living Salary & Benefits Report" published by the Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service, in conjunction with LeadingAge and supported by the National Center for Assisted Living.

Wage increases in assisted living certainly aren't limited to the top. HHCS reported that, nationally, providers increased base pay by 2.83% for management-level employees and 2.76% for non-management in 2019. The employers planned additional increases of 2.82% and 2.81% in those respective categories by this fall.

Meanwhile, assisted living and other residential care facilities will need to fill more than 1.2 million direct care jobs through 2028 — about double the number needed in nursing



Photo: PUNSTUDIO/The Image Bank/Getty Images Plus

Assisted living is facing a massive number of unfilled jobs. Offering a competitive employment package is critical.

homes — according to a January report from national research and consulting organization PHI.

Assisted living communities experienced a 3.3% growth in jobs in 2018, followed by an estimated growth of 3.4% in the first half of 2019 — the strongest assisted living job growth since

2014, according to Argentum. So it's not surprising that 93% of senior living executives surveyed by Argentum last year said labor costs are a "significant" or "moderate" challenge.

"There are workforce challenges across the board," points out Lindsay Schwartz, associate vice president of workforce and

quality improvement for NASL. "We have low unemployment. We have minimum wage increases or proposed increases in many states. You have to be competitive, and it's not just wages. It's the total benefits package."

Attracting workers

Higher pay is key to attracting new workers to the field,

experts say. Another 2019 survey of nearly 1,500 senior care professionals found that senior living organizations felt more competition from nonhealthcare settings (including retailers, hospitality and even the "gig" economy) than did skilled nursing providers.

HHCS identified the following nonmanagement AL positions with salary increases of more than 5% in 2019: activity aides, housekeeping staff, drivers, dishwashers and wait staff.

Knowing what to pay to compete is essential, and since 2018, Argentum has provided its premium partners free access to workforce information customized to its location.

But when trying to attract

KNOW THE NUMBERS

1.2 M+

This number of direct care jobs needs to be filled in residential care through 2028.

— PHI

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

new employees, Brent Weil, Argentum's vice president of workforce development, says providers must do more than increase wages.

Argentum's Senior Living Works program also offers engagement toolkits, outreach resources and presentations for successful recruitment.

"We're really interested in people who want to make a difference and are attracted to a career in caring," Weil says. "It's incumbent on us to lay out the material and psychic benefits our communities can offer."

That may mean helping would-be workers see seniors as residents instead of patients

and better understand the positive role they can have.

It can also mean adding fringe benefits that improve

"You have to be competitive, and it's not just wages. It's the total benefits package."

Lindsay Schwartz, NASL

an employee's quality of life, whether through flex scheduling, bus transportation, access to child care or tuition reimbursement.

Promote job benefits

Schwartz says it's key to highlight overall job benefits rather

than salary alone.

"We have to spell out the career ladders or lattices and offer other innovative benefits, like

technology that supports flexible scheduling," she says. "Be thinking about out-of-the-box, quality-of-life engagement with employees."

Have schedules that can allow caregivers for aging parents to be home at the times they need. Market that asset,

Schwartz says. Employers may want to show prospective and retained employees what the costs of those benefits are.

To compete against hospitality and retail employers, providers also need to drive home messaging around non-tangibles. That goes for leaders as well as housekeeping, activity and culinary staff who have daily interactions with residents.

"Millennials, especially, want meaning in a job," Schwartz says. "If you have a mission, make sure they understand how their tasks and their interactions reinforce that mission." ■

TRAIN TO RETAIN

Turnover is a persistent problem in senior living. A new program, however, aims to create a national pipeline of career-minded workers who'll get additional training, transferable competencies and, potentially, built-in pay increases that encourage them to stay in the industry.

Argentum recently won a nearly \$6 million grant from the Department of Labor to train more than 7,200 apprentices in key senior living and allied health occupations over the next four years.

"Building our talent pool is critical," said Brent Weil, Argentum's vice president of workforce development. "[Tackling] turnover and retention is the key to really having a growing, stable workforce."

Trilogy Health Services, with more than 100 locations across four states, started its own apprenticeships in early 2018. It is one of 12 employers partnering with Argentum on its initiative.

Todd Schmiedeler, the company's senior vice president of foundation and workforce development, said more than 6,000 employees had already entered the program — mostly nurse aides and culinary or dietary staff.

Trilogy apprentices can earn multiple certifications, getting a predetermined raise with each accomplishment. By the time some complete the program, they're earning \$3,000 more annually and are halfway toward an associate's degree.

"Employees, especially in the frontline positions, really just want a clear and transparent career path," Schmiedeler said. "So many companies just say, 'We'll help you become a nurse. We give them a pathway to do that.'"

That approach has led to increased loyalty. The company has seen two-year retention of nurse aides who are active apprentices increase to 83% — compared to 51% among those who are inactive, Schmiedeler says.

Trilogy has also tapped into state resources — a \$700,000 grant in Ohio, \$2,500 per apprentice in Indiana — to offset additional educational and training costs associated with the program.

It's a model that Schmiedeler hopes can inspire others to pursue meaningful means to advancement.

The Argentum apprenticeships will start in 14 states and target certified nursing

assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, rehabilitation technicians, pharmacy technicians, healthcare cybersecurity specialists, and supervisors and executive directors in assisted living.

Participating employers can join a national steering group to define career paths and competencies, Argentum said. Additionally, they will receive technical assistance and access to financial support in the form of federal, state or foundation awards.

"They are basically leveling the playing field, so that regardless of size, employers can move the sector forward," Schmiedeler said. "We've seen the results, and we know that when people stay, our clinical results are better and our employer and customer satisfaction is better."

Apprenticeships can lead to promotions for existing employees or make working in senior care more appealing to young workers who have no experience with older adults by providing structure and case-management experience.

"They're not just getting a job," Weil said. "They could be entering a career."

— Kimberly Marselas

The hottest jobs in senior living today

By John Hall

In LinkedIn's new annual workforce forecast, "Fastest growing jobs of 2020 — and how to hire for them," only one healthcare job made the cut among a variety of gigs, from artificial intelligence specialist to site reliability engineer.

That's not to say there aren't plenty of in-demand jobs within senior living, healthcare's current "growth industry."

A seller's market

Simply put, supply and demand means frontline workers — those who provide direct care — are the most in-demand inside senior living, says Susan Hildebrandt, vice president of Workforce Initiatives for LeadingAge.

Drilling down, however, an unprecedented number of baby boomers living longer and with more chronic diseases than ever means demands for nurse practitioners will be hotter than ever, says Jeff Sandstrom, strategic product marketing manager for post-acute care at Relias, a healthcare consulting and education firm. Demand for NPs will edge up nearly 10% over the next five years, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Other "hot" senior living jobs, according to Sandstrom are:

- **MDS coordinators.** "PDPM has created some waves in the market and certainly impacts MDS coordinators, for whom this new regulation has changed the way they've been doing things for the past 30 years," he says. Those in greatest demand will carry a coveted Certified



Photo: Wavebreakmedia/Stock/Getty Images Plus

MDS coordinators, certified wound care specialists and infection preventionists are in high demand today.

MDS Assessment Coordinator (CMAC) certification, or other certifications, to help prevent organizations from "unintentionally leaving money on the table and ensure accurate coding" under the new reimbursement model, he adds.

- **Certified wound care specialists:** "Whether due to age, multiple comorbidities, immobility and so on, the patient population in post-acute is more susceptible to skin breakdown and therefore is at a higher risk of wounds," Sandstrom says.
- **Infection preventionist:** The new Medicare Rules of Participation mandates this position in every nursing home now. These aren't simply clinicians that took a course on infection control. "IPs have specialized skills to lead the charge," he says. "Recent scares of the

coronavirus and outbreaks leading to resident fatalities have now put this position at the top of the list."

Among the ideal characteristics of this emerging workforce are the possession of soft skills, such as listening and empathy. Also, dementia care experience and aptitude will be critical, as the number of elderly with this disease is expected to triple over the next 30 years.

Commitment to career

Finding well-qualified direct care workers is one thing. But keeping them will require a commitment to training and career ladders or lattices, as well as a positive work environment or culture. "Advanced roles allow employees to build skills, grow in their careers, and can increase compensation and improve retention,"

Hildebrandt says. "What's more, many of these workers are foreign-born immigrants, so cultural competency within a work environment is going to be important."

Peer mentoring is another, says LeadingAge Managing Director Natasha Bryant.

"Specialists" in virtually any long-term care modality will be in high demand in the coming years. Encouraging, educating and exercising specialized care modalities provides the employee with continual stimulation, Sandstrom says. "It's also what the industry needs. Increasing acuity equates to more specialized skill sets."

A perfect example of what Sandstrom describes is behavioral health technician — the one healthcare job that made LinkedIn's "hottest" jobs list for 2020. ■



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Tapping into the millennial mind-set

By Donna Shryer

By any estimate, millennials are a coveted demographic in the workplace, including senior living.

Why embrace this group born between 1980 and 1996? It comes down to their sheer number, which is about 73 million Americans. As of 2016, the millennials officially became the largest generation in the U.S. labor force.

The time is now, therefore, for long-term care and senior living facility managers to embrace building and promoting a working environment that attracts and retains millennials. To that end, it's important to know some key insights into the millennial mind-set and their work ethic.

Millennials view their career path short-term, day by day. "That's different from the boomers' long-term, hierarchical outlook," explains Bruce Tulgan, founder/CEO, Rainmaker Thinking, and author of "Not Everyone Gets A Trophy: How to Manage the Millennials." Millennials are absolutely open to a long-term position, Tulgan emphasizes, but the path evolves organically, one day at a time.

Pride in an organization's mission is important. Google and Twitter may say that free food is a millennial magnet, but it's not what this demographic wants most, according to Amber Rogotzke, the president of management consultancy Health Dimensions Group. "Millennials want to work for an organization that's bigger than the bottom line, and they want a job they're proud of," she says.

A sense of mission is a strong draw for long-term care and senior living organizations, Rogotzke emphasizes: "When an organization exists to care for others — make lives better — and the organization can cascade that purpose to an individual, it bodes well for recruiting and retaining the millennial employee."

Always present an honest job description. The millennial wants to know up-front a job's good, very good and not-so-great attributes. If night shifts, occasional overtime or double shifts are a possibility, be honest, Tulgan says. Misrepresenting a position can come with costly consequences.

"The number one reason millennials leave an organization is because their job isn't what they signed up for," Tulgan says.

Onboarding is particularly important to millennials. Tulgan cites a weak onboarding program as the number two reason for a millennial's swift split with an organization. "These employees want guidance, support, direction and coaching from an organization's leaders. You can't say, 'Shadow Mr. Blue and you'll know what to do.' That won't meet the millennials' need to feel like their voice — their job — is important."

Develop a system to acknowledge employee opinions, solutions and suggestions. "Millennials want to know that their voice is heard," Rogotzke says. "It goes back to working for an organization with a purpose and knowing that they play a part in realizing that purpose." Rogotzke adds a caveat: If an

KNOW THE NUMBERS

32%

of millennials use social media to network or search for a job.

52%

of millennials who feel that they can talk with their manager about non-work-related issues plan to be with their current organization one year from now.

55%

of millennials say they are not engaged at work.

59%

of millennials report that opportunities to learn and grow are extremely important to them when applying for a job.

60%

of millennials say they are open to a different job opportunity.

87%

of millennials rate "professional or career growth and development opportunities" as important to them in a job.

— "How Millennials Want to Work and Live," Gallup, 2016

organization's response rate is too slow, wrapped in red tape or, worse yet, nonexistent, that millennial will likely hop jobs before long.

Ongoing feedback is crucial. "Historically, organizations go with the annual review for performance feedback. The millennial may not make it a year if you don't have a strategy for more frequent check-ins," Rogotzke says. The good news, she adds, is that feedback doesn't have to be about a promotion or raise. "The topic could be about cross-training, a special project, developing a skill or pure recognition. The goal is to let the millennial know they're respected."

For long-term care and senior living organizations, there's a way to power up feedback. "In addition to management, involve patients and residents," Rogotzke suggests. "These people can personally express how important someone's work is, and that goes a long way to say how much someone is valued."

Learning to attract and retain the millennial workforce may continue to bring positive staffing results well into the future. "Understanding the millennial mind-set isn't so much about slicing and dicing the demographic as switching our mind-set to a far more individual approach," Rogotzke says. "We need to look at each employee and ask, 'How can I help move this person to where they want to be?' I don't see a downside to this mind-set — and it will certainly benefit us when we meet the generation coming up." ■

‘I hate my job!’ Tips to prevent burnout

By Amy Novotney

The demanding nature of working in long-term care can take its toll. Days spent providing older adults with assistance with dressing, medication, meals and mobility can be frustrating and exhausting, especially since many facilities today are often understaffed.

“The number one reason for burnout among senior living and skilled nursing direct care workers is that they have too much to do with too little time and too little help,” says Donna Cutting, founder and CEO of RedCarpetLearning.com.

But by encouraging employees to adopt healthy lifestyle choices and focusing on burnout and compassion fatigue prevention, administrators can help minimize work stresses and their toll. Here are a few tips from Cutting and others on how to do just that:

Offer up a safe space. One way to help prevent employees from feeling overwhelmed is ensuring they have a safe place in the facility to talk about some of these challenges — be it the loss of a resident or a patient’s family that may seem overly critical that day.

Help them look long term. Allow employees to see a future bigger than what they have right now, Cutting says. One way to do this is to provide new employees with the tools, training and support they need to do their best, she notes. Offering opportunities to pursue additional training — off-site or within the facility — also communicates your commitment



Working in long-term care can easily lead to burnout. Creating a supportive environment helps alleviate it.

to their advancement, says Peg Tobin, president and owner of the long-term care staffing and consulting company Tobin & Associates.

Consider flexible scheduling options. Some research suggests that offering shorter and more flexible shifts to employees can help attract more workers and reduce stress on full-time staff, as well as improve resident care and outcomes. Cutting points to the LifeSpire of Virginia’s “30/40 initiative,” introduced in 2018 to help retain full- and part-time certified nursing assistants. The program is named for the total number of hours a CNA works in a week, 30, and the total number of hours for which a CNA is paid, 40.

To receive the incentive, CNAs must be present and on time for each of their shifts, and they may not call off, arrive late or leave early. Those who meet the requirements for the incentive each week will receive an additional two hours of pay per day, while those who do not meet the requirements of the program forfeit the incentive for the entire week. The program has helped LifeSpire reduce staff turnover and allowed workers to achieve a better work-life balance, Cutting says.

Celebrate successes. In the midst of the hustle and bustle, a simple thank you can go a long way, Tobin notes.

“Employees really just want to be feel like they are being

seen,” she says. “Small things like complimenting them on the things they do well can make a big difference.”

Cutting agrees, adding that every day, team members create stories worth celebrating. It’s important to share these stories as a team — in a staff meeting, on a bulletin board or in a weekly newsletter — and acknowledge the impact these small acts can have on residents.

“If we don’t celebrate them, people may forget just how important this work we do every day really is,” she says.

Provide time to socialize. When employees have opportunities to enjoy a meal and have fun together, it can lead to better communication and teamwork on the job, Cutting says. “We often dismiss social activity planning as fluff, but by fostering friendships, you can help develop a team that has each other’s backs,” she says. ■

KNOW THE NUMBERS

63

This percent of people is more likely to take a sick day because of burnout.

— Gallup Workplace, 2018



Remember when...

...we had to actually drive to a store
to buy whatever we needed?

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could lock in a ride from anywhere?

**...having a
“staffing partner”
meant you had to
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Want to hire me? Show me the money

By John Hall

Least anyone doubt how quickly and deeply recent economic forces have fundamentally transformed work life in America, spend 16 minutes watching the short documentary, “It’s About Time,” on YouTube.

There, you will discover how at any given moment, 100 million Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. You’d also find how 40% of American households are unable to write a personal check for \$400 at the drop of a hat. And that was before the turmoil caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Some of those households are headed by nurses and aides, who are the primary breadwinner for immediate and often extended family, yet an ever-more elusive permanent fixture in nursing homes today.

Digging deeper, you also will learn how some senior living providers are successfully finding and keeping those nurses with daily paychecks — one solution to what is undeniably the workforce crisis of our time.

Executive Director Mary Haynes, RN, MS, MSN, CNHA, president and CEO of Nazareth Home, a Louisville, KY-based long-term care community, was looking for such a workforce answer when her community acquired a medium-sized facility to complete its existing standalone campus three years ago. Then only a fraction of caregiving staff were actual full-time employees. The rest were agency workers.

“As I began to have focus groups with these individuals, trying to find out why they were



Photo: SDI Productions/E+/Getty Images Plus

There is not one magic bullet to recruiting and retaining employees. Providing instant paychecks may be one answer.

working for the staffing agency and why they didn’t come into our employ, the response was, “We want to get paid the same day we work,” says Haynes. Her community was featured in the YouTube documentary, produced by PayActiv, a San Jose, CA-based company that deposits cash into workers’ bank accounts the same day they’re earned.

Turnover trouble

With over half a million positions unfilled across all of healthcare, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, retention, without a doubt, is the most confounding problem in senior living today.

And there is no magic bullet.

The 800-pound gorilla is money. Perks and benefits are important, but cash is king. According to Argentum, senior living employees’ hourly wages will rise an average of 3% in 2020.

A DAILY STRUGGLE



13%

Given their low annual earnings, nursing assistants experience a high rate of poverty. Thirteen percent live below the federal poverty line.

— U.S. Nursing Assistants Employed in Nursing Homes: Key Facts, PHI, 2019

What works

Two out-of-the-box approaches to the recruitment conundrum are: alternative sources of workers and instant paychecks.

The latter has been so popular and successful for Haynes, it allowed her to quickly convert nearly every agency nurse and aide to full-time employee status. And, thanks to a strong work culture

and an envy-inducing \$20-per-hour-plus wage across every nursing level, Haynes feels confident, while admitting there’s much work still to be done to keep elevating the near 40% retention rate of Nazareth’s 420 employees.

“It’s a way we can live out our philosophy and culture that we want to grow here, which is the empowerment of everyone and keeping the dignity of that person in their space,” Haynes says.

Solving the problem of retention? Here are some tried-and-true strategies:

- Offer paid time off.
- Flexibility — in schedules, leaves and even work duties.
- Embrace technology at every possible turn.
- Offer and insist on additional training. Not only does it keep a workforce up to mounting challenges, it gives them skin in the game and an ongoing sense of worth. ■

Wages for SNF administrators, DONs show strength in tight labor market

By Liza Berger

How does a constricted labor market affect long-term care? Try unprecedented demand for high- and low-level positions. In turn, conditions have pressured salaries higher.

“The labor market has never been as tight as it is today and organizations are having to get much more creative to attract and retain staff,” points out Anthony Perry, president of Executive Search Solutions, a recruitment firm for the senior living sector.

As of early March, the longest bull market in United States history had turned up the pressure for employees up and down the long-term care chain — from CNAs to the C-suite — according to experts commenting on compensation data in the 2019–20 “Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report,” the largest



High turnover rates reflect that all levels of nursing — including LPNs, CNAs and RNs — remain much in demand.

Photo: ER Productions Limited/DigitalVision/Getty Images Plus

annual survey of long-term care professionals. It was published by LeadingAge and supported by the American Health Care Association.

The 42nd annual industry analysis from Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service gathered input from 1,611

U.S. nursing homes, encompassing 166,000 employees.

At first glimpse, those at the top of the compensation pyramid had a less than stellar year. Administrators’ national average wage expanded by 1.67% to \$111,842, while directors of nursing experienced a 1.81%

salary increase to \$96,720.

But a closer look conveys a slightly different picture. Among facilities that also participated in the survey in 2018, administrators’ salaries increased by a robust 4.35% to \$127,967 in 2019. Directors of nursing saw a slightly more modest 3% sal-

All charts contain information from the 2019-2020 “Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report”

Recent salaries and increases (all facilities, by percentage)

Title	2014	+%	2015	+%	2016	+%	2017	+%	2018	+%
Administrator*	100,000	5	102,003	2.00	106,594	4.5	110,000	3.19	111,842	1.67
Asst. Admin.*	69,222	-2.6	67,890	-1.92	61,648	-9.2	N/A	N/A	70,007	N/A
DON	86,692	2	90,003	3.82	92,822	3.1	95,000	2.34	96,720	1.81
Asst. DON	67,320	1.1	68,640	1.96	70,013	2.0	71,410	1.99	75,338	5.50

*(Health Services)

Nursing home administrator (health services) (salary medians by percentile) (\$)

For-profit, fewer than 110 beds		Not-for-profit, fewer than 110 beds		For-profit, 110 beds and over		Not-for-profit, 110 beds and over	
Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary
25th	96,203	25th	86,351	25th	110,000	25th	103,291
50th	105,959	50th	94,767	50th	120,000	50th	118,409
75th	115,983	75th	104,957	75th	132,600	75th	133,457

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES



Photo: SDI Productions/E+/Getty Images Plus

An emphasis on communication between managers and their employees as well as rewarding employees will increase worker satisfaction, which could improve retention rates, compensation experts say.

ary increase to \$103,343 using the same comparison method, which analysts typically use as a better method of comparison.

Feeling bullish

Other high-level positions saw strong wage growth. Salaries of executive directors jumped to \$207,848 in 2019, a whopping 5.45% increase.

Retirements, in part, are driving this demand, notes Matt Leach, senior consultant with Total Compensation Solutions based in Armonk, NY. A total of 60% of CEOs or executive directors are said to be retiring in the next few years, he says. This has resulted in increased turnover and the need for long-term care to pay bigger bucks.

Among his firm's clients, for example, three recently hired CEOs. These three were: promoted from within, snatched from another area of healthcare, and lured from a continuing care retirement community across the country.

"They [facilities] have to pay key executives more money, or recruit and retain the ones they have," Leach explains.

Thanks to a booming economy, positions at both ends of the spectrum fared well over the past year. Consider the following: Wages for housekeepers expanded by 2.97%, while those for wait staff rose by 3.06%.

It's a question of supply and demand, compensation experts point out. When supply cannot

meet demand, it creates a labor shortage and wage pressures. The hospitality field, including hotels and restaurants, is among the industries competing with long-term care, Leach notes.

"I can't remember a time when it [the labor market] was tighter," according to Perry, speaking well before the recent turmoil. "Where [in 2018] it was tight, the ancillary or support positions, like housekeeping, maintenance, cooks, were still very easy to fill. [In 2019], those positions are becoming harder and harder to fill."

As a sure sign of the unique long-term care labor market, Perry offers this example: Some cooks have received sign-on bonuses.

"I had never seen that before in my three and a half decades in the business," Perry notes about a \$2,000 sign-on bonus paid to a cook in the Phoenix area. "Now I've seen it."

Perhaps underscoring facilities' labor challenges, some of the biggest salary increases took place among positions related to recruitment and retention. Examples: Compensation for the director of human resources rose by 4.01%, while pay for the director of staff development increased 3.21% and the salary of the scheduling coordinator expanded 3.56%.

Regarding the latter position, Leach notes: "If you have a good scheduler, you'll have a good organization. A good scheduler means everyone is happy and you retain talent. They [facilities] see a competitive advantage and they are willing to pay higher wages for a job like the scheduler."

The economy actually may have other indirect effects, such as driving seniors to move. "The two are not unrelated because there is a lot of retirement going on, and a lot of people moving into CCRCs," says Paul Gavejian, managing director of Total Compensation Solutions.

Turnover tale

Demand remains high in one key category: nurses.

"For CNA and nursing positions, supply is not meeting the

Director of nurses (health services) (salary medians by percentile) (\$)

For-profit, fewer than 110 beds		Not-for-profit, fewer than 110 beds		For-profit, 110 beds and over		Not-for-profit, 110 beds and over	
Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary	Percentile	Salary
25th	84,989	25th	83,148	25th	91,885	25th	93,649
50th	90,197	50th	88,361	50th	100,887	50th	100,637
75th	100,000	75th	97,525	75th	110,089	75th	113,508

demand, and it will continue to become more competitive as we have growth in the industry,” says Mark Heston, the president of Heston and Associates, a consulting firm that works in the areas of leadership development and coaching, compensation and strategic planning.

Turnover rates reflect that nurses — LPNs, CNAs and RNs — are still a hot commodity. The national average in turnover was 36% among RNs, 32% among LPNs and 46% among CNAs.

Moreover, there is an increasing number of retiring nurses in the acute-care sector, which affects openings in the long-term care space, Perry says.

Other factors

It’s not all about the economy. Staffing ratios, such as those in California, are compounding staffing challenges and affecting compensation. There is also significant movement involving mergers and acquisitions of nursing home properties. Because of easy access to capital, for instance, many small chains have emerged.

“This has become more prevalent because of cheap money ... which is creating the opportunity for people to start their own businesses,” Perry says.

Mission: Recruit and retain

Facilities that are able to recruit and retain their employees will be the real winners, compensation experts point out.

“One of the biggest problems we have in the industry is wage pressure, and if you don’t give people a reason to stay, they’ll leave,” points out Heston, who earlier in his career served as chief of human resources for Life Care Resources, which manages



Photo: Alitair Berg/DigitalVision/Getty Images Plus

Facilities that are able to recruit and retain employees in the current labor environment will be the real winners, benefits specialists say.

National trend of average salaries (same participating facilities, year-to-year)

	2018	2019	+%
Admin.	122,628	127,967	4.35
Asst. Admin.	71,694	74,175	3.46
DON	100,506	103,343	2.82
Asst. DON	83,847	85,511	1.98

National bonus data

	Avg. salary	Avg. bonus	% bonus to salary
Admin.	118,277	16,207	13.70
DON	99,663	13,392	13.44

rental senior living communities.

One way that facilities increasingly are luring employees is through robust incentive plans, according to Leach. Under these bonus plans, an employee’s pay will vary from year to year based on a facility hitting an organizationwide goal.

Bonus data provided in the survey suggests that facilities are succeeding financially. The percentage of bonus to salary was 16.3% for executive director, 15.4% for chief financial officer, 14.4% for director of human resources and 13.7% for nursing home administrator. “At the end of the day, the top organizations are performing quite well and the pay reflects that,” Leach says.

Getting ahead

Attracting and keeping qualified talent does not have to be complicated. It begins for The Clare, a continuing care retirement community in Chicago, at the interview process, explains Kyle Exline, its executive director.

Since the facility is near Northwestern Hospital, there is not a shortage of capable registered nurses and CNAs in the area. The challenge is finding the right employees for the environment, Exline notes.

“We do a really good job of taking the interview process seriously and vetting candidates appropriately and making the best decisions we can,” he comments.

“Retaining them and keeping them motivated are then what we strive for.”

As opposed to trying to “fill holes,” the community focuses on finding the right candidate from the get-go, he explains.

While a person’s experience and capability for the role are key, the facility prioritizes the candidate’s personality, including his or her mannerisms and how he or she interacts, over the person’s professional experience and training. The rationale? While the organization feels confident it can teach and train candidates in cases where technical skills are lacking, it cannot necessarily help someone fit into the culture of the organization.

“Those more ‘soft skills’ are what we are looking for,” Exline says. “The soft skills are much harder to teach.”

Exline notes that the first 90 days are especially important for a new hire, and the organization does not hesitate to execute a termination if the employee is not passing muster.

In terms of retaining employees, the facility provides additional training to workers, offers tuition assistance to encourage staff to receive additional schooling, and promotes from within. It regularly recognizes successful staff members, including a “kudos program” in which residents and family members submit cards touting employees’ accomplishments.

Those little touches make “people feel like they are part of this community, part of this family ... we are looking for ways to make them feel appreciated,” Exline says.

The facility’s efforts have paid off: Turnover is less than 22% for the 10-year-old facility. ■



MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

The motivational power of a positive workplace

By John Hall

During a recent visit with a client, Alexandra Powell spent a few days watching a powerful CEO dampen the moods of 3,000 employees with his body language. An unconventional type, the man privately admitted to her he wasn't in the habit of smiling, even though the company value of compassion was specifically described as "smiling and greeting others."

"It gave 3,000 people the message that the company value of compassion wasn't present in senior leadership," recalls Powell, U.S. director of Client Culture and Engagement for Reward Gateway: The Employee Engagement People. After acknowledging his introverted tendencies, the CEO spent the next few days at headquarters purposely, yet genuinely, smiling at everyone who crossed his path.

"After that, we saw an uptick in employees' confidence in their values because of that one behavior," adds Powell. "That CEO felt he was a compassionate person with integrity, but his team needed evidence they could see: a leader who'd smile at them in the hallway. If you or your people don't know what living by your values looks like, then you need to start working on that."

The anecdote is instructive. Powell believes providers would fare better imbuing basic values into everyday workplace life, even if that means spelling it out



Photo: Luis Alvarez/DigitalVision/Getty Images Plus

Strong cultural values translate to improved retention, partly by providing the basis for staff engagement.

in ways that can be clearly seen by others.

"Maybe we need to be very explicit about what we think practicing specific values looks like," she says. "If you don't know what they mean, then define them. In sum, these values send powerful messages to new employees. If I feel welcome and I'm not getting elbowed out of the way in the breakroom and instead people are smiling and greeting me, then this seems like a more comfortable place to stay," she says.

How do strong cultural values translate into better retention? For one, they provide the basis for staff engagement. "In this day and age, people want to work for a company with a soul and they're making decisions on where to work based on how well they will be treated," Powell says.

Recognition is a powerful way

to make that point.

Powell believes one of the ways to make sure your recognition efforts are effective and strategic is to tie the work people do to a higher purpose. In a nursing home or assisted living community, the obvious one is the impact their work has on residents. The problem for many leaders, however, is finding the time and "enthusiasm" to do the task of recognition, she says, referencing a recent Harvard Business Review study that found people are almost twice as likely to help others when the last person they helped demonstrated a genuine gratitude.

"It's human nature to listen more when you start a team meeting recognizing what went well," she says. "It says, 'We're going to celebrate what works and not just pick on what's broken.'"

Powell believes many providers today grapple with the kind and appropriateness of rewards.

"If your managers are handing out Starbucks cards to their team, maybe some of them hate coffee," she explains.

The key is variety. "Rewards are wonderful — especially if you have frontline people who are worried about paying bills and making ends meet," she says.

Tying the gift from a more thoughtful place, like grocery gift cards for lower paid nurses aides, achieves better results.

"That's why it's well worth spending a few minutes each week asking your people what makes them feel appreciated because, in the long run, if we can engage them, we're not only going to continue getting their employment, but their best work as well." ■

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION



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MANAGER'S TOOLBOX: TECHNOLOGY

Technology addresses key retention challenges

By John Hall

More than ever, technology is shaping the content and character of today's senior living workforce. It's also playing a pivotal role in combating the nurse shortage and boosting recruitment and retention, three objectives that are key to a healthy and stable long-term care workforce.

Few approaches are considered taboo anymore when it comes to efforts to solve today's profound workforce challenges. One burgeoning trend — the “gig economy” — is providing a means of staffing facility workforces without the byproduct of turnover.

“As this technology continues to evolve, so do our habits right along with it. Whether it's how we connect with friends, how we buy our groceries, or how we streamline our businesses, we can all agree the tools and resources it has fostered are changing our modern world and helping providers meet key challenges,” says Matt Creason, co-founder of ShiftKey, which provides fully vetted “as-needed” staff using a platform for workforce scheduling and credential monitoring.

Challenges persist

Although internet-enabled technologies have exponentially evolved over the past 10 years, providers have yet to fully exploit their potential for solving workforce problems. “The truth is, when you are charged with pro-

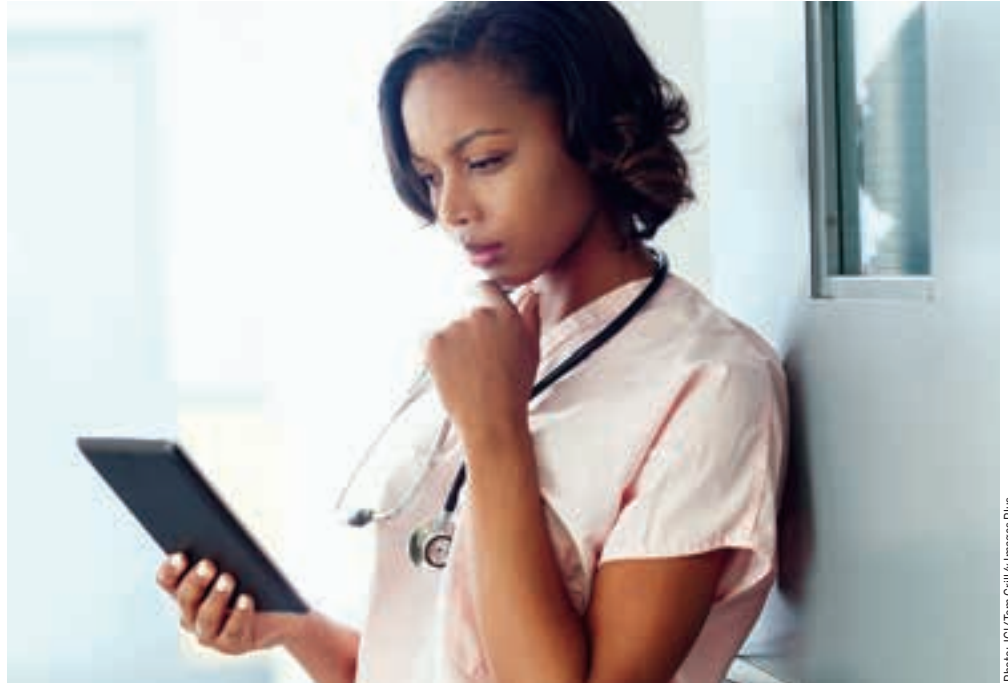


Photo: JG/Tom Grillo/ix Images Plus

ShiftKey's scheduling platform advertises open shifts to a network of as-needed healthcare providers.

viding patient care at the highest level in an already understaffed profession, the time it takes to interview, hire, train and retain talent is essentially an additional full-time job,” says Creason. “And finding a way to get that time back has become a huge step in solving an even bigger problem.”

In the past, when a facility found itself in a position with less than adequate staff, the immediate decision typically involved overtime. Then, as other employees left, the overtime translated to mounting reports in the media about the effects of nurse burn-out, adds Creason, who helped launch ShiftKey in 2016 after running his own traditional staffing company. ShiftKey's internal scheduling system eliminates the need for agencies by advertising open shifts directly to a network of as-needed providers.

He asserts that hiring the right kind of as-needed staff up-front can go far in eliminating the “endless cycle” of filling shift openings in nursing homes and other senior care facilities, at a cost rivaling that of internal overtime, he adds.

Tools to boost recruitment

Depending on the platform, technology has given transparency to schedules, allowing staff and freelance nurses to view them in real time, switch and choose shifts on the fly, even request time off or tap into flex time. These tools also have been shown to give senior living providers of all kinds a competitive edge when it comes to recruitment and retention.

“This eliminates the barriers between providers and relief nurses,” says Creason, whose self-described “Uber-style plat-

form” is designed to connect clients directly with qualified healthcare professionals.

Even the most ardent “techie” are quick to admit they understand there is a limitation of technology when it comes the human in “human resources.”

“Do I think that any form of technology geared toward staffing could ever replace looking someone in the eye during an interview before you finally decide to make them a part of your team? Absolutely not,” he says. “But I do believe that new technology is able to provide us a unique advantage and entirely change our perception about how to make best use of time and resources.

“Technology may not be the key that makes that final call whether you hire someone, but it most certainly puts you in the position to do so that much faster.” ■

MANAGER'S TOOLBOX:
TECHNOLOGY



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Remember when...

...we had to actually drive to a store
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Guardian Pharmacy Services

Company Profile

Guardian Pharmacy Services is one of the fastest-growing long-term care pharmacy companies in the U.S., providing a wide range of services to assisted living communities, skilled nursing homes, CCRCs and behavioral health groups through our national network of pharmacies.

We conduct business according to the Golden Rule, treating our customers, residents and each other fairly and honestly. Guardian's commitment to excellence and to providing outstanding customer service defines our corporate character and inspires us every day.

What We Do

Guardian pharmacies work hard to understand each customer and the specific needs of their community. We develop meaningful relationships with community staff, residents and families to create fine-tuned, customized pharmacy solutions that ensure safety, accuracy and resident satisfaction.

Our Mission

Guardian aims to personally empower our customers with the resources they need to provide the best service to their residents. We maintain the highest level of service and sensitivity required to meet the individualized needs of each community.

The Guardian Way

Guardian Pharmacy Services has a unique business model that allows us to offer both the personalized services of a local pharmacy and the resources of a large corporation.

Each Guardian Pharmacy is vested with the authority to make day-to-day decisions at the local level. Assisting our pharmacies is the corporate Guardian Pharmacy Services team in Atlanta, who provide support in areas such as accounting, IT, recruiting, etc. This support allows the local pharmacy team to focus on customers and the specific needs of their market.

We believe this business approach leads to better customer service, greater accuracy and efficiency of medication distribution.

FastFacts



Website: www.guardianpharmacy.net

Phone: (888) 535-4779

Email: answers@guardianpharmacy.net

Address: 171 17th Street, Suite 1400, Atlanta, GA 30363

Date founded: 2004

Presence: Guardian Pharmacy Services is based in Atlanta, GA, and currently has 37 pharmacy locations that serve nearly 129,000 patients across 25 states.

What We Offer

Clinical Support

Guardian streamlines processes and helps integrate multiple eMAR/EHR technologies to make sure medication management is efficient and error-free.

Our pharmacies regularly meet with community staff through on-site visits, and host continuing education and training courses to help lower the risk of medication error and enhance the level of resident care.

Simplified Billing

Medication billing can be challenging for any long-term care provider, but it doesn't have to be. All billing, dispensing, consulting and customer service are handled by the local pharmacy, not from a remote hub.

We educate residents and families on Medicare Part D plans that best fit their needs and help reduce costs. From pre-authorizations and noncovered medications to the "donut hole," our local experts take the extra steps and make the extra time to ensure there are no billing issues or questions.

Seamless Pharmacy Transition

Guardian offers hands-on support to new customers making a pharmacy switch. We work hard to ease the transition process by coordinating timelines that reduce burden on the community and save staff time.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU:

Providing VALUE beyond medication.



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PharMerica

Company Profile

Mission Statement

To make a difference in people's lives and communities.

Company History

PharMerica is a full-service pharmacy solution providing value beyond medication. PharMerica is the long-term care pharmacy services provider of choice for senior living communities, skilled nursing facilities, public health organizations and post-acute care organizations. PharMerica is one of the nation's largest pharmacy companies.

Who We Serve

PharMerica serves skilled nursing, senior living, behavioral health & I/DD, specialty pharmacy, specialty home infusion, hospital management and more.

PharMerica serves all states with the exception of North Dakota.

PharMerica takes care of facilities of all sizes and complexity — from group homes to national chains — represented in over 330,000+ beds.

A large part of our success comes from a deep commitment at every level of our organization. Every day, our leaders and our employees work to improve services designed to help improve resident and patient care. PharMerica boasts best-in-class metrics:

- * 97.33% delivery on-time
- * 99.64% order completeness

Culture

Company Environment

PharMerica offers unmatched employee development, an exceptional company culture, seemingly endless opportunities for advancement and the highest hiring goals in decades.

Type of People We Seek to Employ

We want passionate and driven professionals who enjoy working in a team environment.

What Sets our Company Apart From Other Employers

We're growing! PharMerica recently merged with BrightSpring Health Services to become the leading provider of diversified home and community health and pharmacy services to medically complex patient populations.

FastFacts



Website: www.pharmerica.com

Phone: (502) 627-7000

Email: pharmerica@pharmerica.com

Address: 805 N. Whittington Pkwy., Louisville, KY 40222

Date founded: 2006

Presence: 3,100+ facilities in 49 states

Learning and Development

Training Programs

We provide online and on-site training and tuition assistance for qualified employees.

Opportunities for Career Advancement

PharMerica offers numerous career paths for its talented employees with great opportunity nationwide for career advancement. We offer tuition assistance for qualified employees after one year of employment as well as internship opportunities for students.

Employee Benefits

We offer 401k match, medical, dental, vision, short and long-term disability, life insurance, and paid time off/holidays for qualified employees.

We also provide employee discounts, employee assistance program, and fixed hours with flexible schedule.

PharMerica continues to redefine long-term care pharmacy. PharMerica acts as a thought leader in LTC pharmacy, pushing advancements in technology, cost savings and overall value.

As a closed-door pharmacy with multiple care settings including hospital, long-term care and home settings, PharMerica offers employees the ability to work with pharmacists, doctors, nurses and insurance companies.

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