Quantitative Analysis of Staffing Retention Practices in Skilled Nursing Facilities

Sara Beckendorf, Jennifer Johs-Artiseni, Ph.D., M.P.H., Lindsey Creapeau, M.A., and Kristy Lauver, Ph.D.
Health Care Administration Program, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

BACKGROUND

- Many long-term care facilities share a common issue of staffing challenges.
- This project focuses on finding root causes and solutions to these issues.
- The solution to these problems will benefit management in nursing facilities when dealing with staffing issues and will be helpful for maintaining residents’ quality of life.

HYPOTHESES

- When organizations are fully staffed, and especially when they have consistent staffing, residents receive better care (Bullock, 2008).
- If staffing strategies and practices that correlate with desirable organizational performance can be identified, administrators will be more informed and better positioned to retain staff within their own facility.

METHODLOGY

- Student and faculty researchers completed Institutional Review Board training and data was collected from 19 nursing facilities in 6 states, primarily located in the upper Midwest (WA, MN, WI, IL, CO, A2).
- A crowdsourcing method (Keating, 2013) was used to identify strategies to address nursing assistant staffing challenges in nursing homes from among administrative leaders attending conferences and on several Facebook groups. From this, a checklist was developed to explore the frequency in which facilities were utilizing these strategies.
- A Management Practices to Support Workforce Stability questionnaire (Omini, 2010) was adapted to use a Likert scale to assess perceptions of how important such items were to nursing assistant (CNA/NAR) retention.
- Administrative/practicing students conducted interviews with each facility’s Nursing Home Administrator, Director of Nursing, and five CNAs/NARs to collect facility and participant demographic data, complete the checklist, and assess perceptions of management practices on CNA/NAR retention.
- Nursing Home Star rating data including overall star rating, Health Inspection, Staffing Rating, Quality Measures Rating, and Health Inspection Date were also added to the dataset.

RESULTS

- Statistical correlations were conducted to look for relationships between management practices and CNA/NAR retention.
- A few interesting findings included:
  - Orientation/Onboarding: (1) Practicing more consistent strategies related to Orientation/Onboarding had lower CNA turnover; (2) Having a formal check-in process for new hires is related to better staffing ratios and higher star ratings.
  - A Values Package for new employees was related to lower turnover.
  - Emotional Support: (1) Offering Bonuses/Leave was correlated with lower CNA turnover; (2) Offering Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) was related to lower turnover.
  - Employee Support: (1) Giving a childcare discount is related to lower CNA turnover; (2) Utilizing high-quality services to support employees, especially emotionally.

DISCUSSION

- Employers who are attuned to their employees’ needs tend to see lower turnover rates.
  - This can especially be accomplished in practice by offering a thorough Orientation and Onboarding process for new employees.
- Employees also seem benefit from practices that offer them both practical and emotional support.
- Many Administrators and DONs underestimate how important certain practices may be to retaining CNAs.
  - DONs valued the majority of practices as more important to CNA retention than Administrators did.
  - Although pay is important to CNAs, they rated the following items as even more important than pay:
    - Caregiving relationships with their supervisor
    - Teamwork
    - Ability to safely perform their job
  - Although in several areas, DONs seem to have clearer perceptions to what was important to CNAs than Administrators did, a few notable differences included:
    - DONs undervaluing the importance of a positive relationship between DONs and their Supervisor as well as the importance of orientation/ onboarding
    - DONs overvaluing the importance of pay.

CONCLUSION

- When nursing home leadership better understands what practices can be used to decrease turnover, they can work to implement changes such as improving employee orientation and onboarding and finding additional ways to support employees, especially emotionally.
- Leadership is also well-served to recognize that what they think is important to staff retention may not really be what is most important to their CNAs.
  - Open communication, perhaps via exit interviews and more importantly “stay” interviews could be beneficial in helping leadership better understand what is most likely to keep their CNAs/NARs working for them.
  - Focusing more attention toward practices that are likely to improve working relationships with supervisors and co-workers and improving their ability to safely perform their jobs and provide quality resident care are strategies that are most aligned with what CNAs value from their employers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Center for Health Administration and Aging Services Excellence; University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire Office of Research and Sponsored Programs; University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire Learning and Technology Services, and Department of Management and Marketing.