



Improve Staff Stability

CONSUMER FACT SHEET

Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Homes is a national campaign that began in September 2006. Our goal is to improve the quality of care and life for the 1.5 million people served by nursing homes in the United States. Nursing homes and their staff, along with residents and their families and consumers can join in this effort by working on the campaign goals that are designed to improve quality. We do this by providing tools and resources to help nursing homes achieve their quality improvement goals. To learn more about the campaign, visit www.nhqualitycampaign.org.

This fact sheet is about the goal of improving staff stability at nursing homes.

What is staff stability?

Most nursing homes measure how long their staff continues to work for them. They also measure how often staff leaves. Nursing homes that keep good staff working longer in the same positions have more stable staff. This "staff stability" promotes more consistent, higher quality care. Homes with higher staff turnover rates tend to face many challenges in this regard.

Why is staff stability important?

People, who work in long-term care, care about their work. That is why they continue this work. They also care for the people they work for. They want to make a difference in people's lives.

Stable nursing home staffs are familiar with resident routines. This increased awareness helps provide better care. Stable staffs develop stronger bonds with residents and staff. Keeping the same staff means less time spent to orient new or temporary staff about resident care routines. This means fewer care interruptions.

What are the challenges to retaining staff?

Keeping good staff is a challenge for employers everywhere (including nursing homes). The reasons vary but might include:

- The pay and benefits may be too low to meet the employee's needs.
- The home's staff resources, supervision and development may be disappointing.
- The employee may have a better job opportunity.
- The employee may leave to further his or her education.
- The employee is ready to retire.
- The employee must relocate.

What can homes do to help keep good staff?

- Create a workplace that respects, values, recognizes and supports staff.
- Provide staff with ongoing training that is relevant and builds their skills.
- Ensure workloads are fair, balanced and predictable.
- Give staff a voice by encouraging feedback, collaboration and teamwork.
- Encourage staff to form close bonds with the residents.
- Promote consistent assignment (CA) so staff can learn residents' wants and needs.

How does staff stability help you as a nursing home resident?

- You don't have to explain your wants and needs to new staff often.
- You can expect your needs to be met correctly and in a timely manner.
- You are more likely to receive better organized, higher quality care.
- You can be more at ease with personal care from staff you know.
- If you have dementia, you can be more at ease with caregivers you know.
- You are able to build strong relationships with staff.

How does staff stability help nursing home staff?

- Staff can get to know your needs and wants.
- Familiarity with you, the home and other staff makes for better care.
- Staff who continuously work together tend to be better organized teams.
- Staff is less likely to have to deal with temporary staff unfamiliar with routines.

How does staff stability benefit the nursing home?

- Reduces time and costs of hiring new staff, including:
 - Advertising.
 - Interviewing.
 - Hiring and training.
 - Filling in with temporary workers until positions are filled.
- Contributes to a happier, more productive workplace.
- Helps in recruiting other good workers.
- Helps to enhance care quality, resident satisfaction and the home's image.

What are some questions you can ask about staff stability?

- Ask other residents and family members whether they have caregivers who have cared for them for a long time.
- How long have my or my loved one's caregivers worked at the home?
- How long have management staff worked at the home?
- What are the nursing home's staff retention and turnover rates?
- What does the home do to keep good staff?

How can you encourage staff retention?

- Encourage the home's leaders to develop a plan for keeping good staff if they don't already have one.
- Offer your suggestions for keeping and appreciating staff.
- Work with the resident and family councils to help:
 - Recognize good staff.
 - Encourage training programs for staff.
 - Encourage the home to survey staff.
- Encourage the home to participate in the Advancing Excellence Campaign and make use of the tools and resources on the website.