

# fastfacts

Resources for Nursing Home Professionals

## Effective Strategies for New Staff Orientation

Well designed new staff orientation programs in nursing home facilities enhance job satisfaction, increase staff retention, and improve quality of patient care. Properly trained and welcomed nurses and other health professionals feel good about their new job, quickly integrate with peers and colleagues, and stay longer in their jobs. They also develop a sense of teamwork and commitment to their new role more rapidly, which can improve staff retention by 25 percent. This Fast Fact focuses on ways that nursing home leaders can develop successful strategies for new staff orientation in long-term care facilities.

### Prepare a Memorable Program and Make New Staff Feel Part of a Team

- **Develop an interesting, interactive, and fun program.** Make the first day a celebration. Orientation programs do not have to be dry, boring, or exhaustive. Avoid extensive lectures, tedious presentations of facts and figures, and interminable paperwork. Instead, use role-play exercises, introduction games, multimedia, stories, brief videos, hands-on experiences, demonstrations, and interactive exercises. Get new staff out among the employees and introduce them.
- **Be prepared for your employee's first day of work.** First impressions of the new job are permanent. Preparing in advance for a welcoming and interesting induction program enables new nurses to adjust rapidly to their new work environment and feel part of your facility. Prepare a new employee's working area, badges, uniforms, paperwork, keys, and entry codes. Introduce your new staff to their co-workers, and residents. Conduct an enthusiastic tour of your entire facility. To be better prepared, create and follow a checklist of the entire orientation process. Pay for new staff members meals during their first week on the job.
- **Make the new staff feel comfortable and part of the team.** Make new staff feel special and welcomed. Accelerate opportunities for new staff to fit with the team by developing a sense of acceptance and belonging that is associated with nursing job satisfaction. Consider a special celebration to welcome a new employee by having welcome signs, team lunches, or a cake celebration. Build multiple opportunities for your new staff to meet with employees from all departments throughout your facility to build rapport. Pay special consideration to the introduction of the new staff to residents who will be under their care.

### ■ Complete paperwork, but limit it on the first day.

Administrative paperwork such as employment agreements, benefit packages, and insurance policies should not take up all the time of your new hire orientation. One common mistake is to try to get everything done on the first day. Spread your administrative paperwork to short sessions during the first week.

### ■ Assign meaningful work and hands-on care experiences.

Slow down. Rarely will a new employee remember everything that is being thrown at him or her on the first day. Instead of giving heavy and complicated regulation manuals on the first day of work, assign hands-on experiences with care processes that make staff feel more rapidly integrated into their jobs.

### Assign an Inspiring Mentor and Provide a Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Vision

- **Have new employees meet with department heads.** To gain a broad perspective of your facility, schedule short meetings with all department heads. Provide an overview of each department's function. Show the importance of working in a multidisciplinary team environment with CNAs, nurses, dietitians, MDs, nurses, social services, wound nurses, and other health professionals. From the beginning, let them see that everyone is working toward the same goal of excellent care and service.
- **Develop a comprehensive mentor system.** A mentor is an experienced, friendly staff person who is assigned to work with a new staff member. They serve four roles: role model, social support, tutor, and peer resource. A mentoring program supplements, but does not replace, existing orientation and training. Mentoring programs increase staff retention, motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. A mentor provides continuity in the orientation process and increases quality resident care. Peer-mentoring programs provide a career ladder for qualified staff members.

## Effective Strategies for New Staff Orientation

### Outline Job Expectations but Show the Big Picture

- **Explain job responsibilities, expectations, and rewards.** Provide a clear outline of job description, duties, and performance goals. Highlight job responsibilities, care plans, and career paths. Consider hands-on care demonstrations and training for new CNAs and RNs. Show a career ladder and discuss the potential for advancement opportunities.
- **Show the big picture, not just staff portion of work.** Highlight the vision, goals, culture, and accomplishments of your facility with a well designed and brief presentation using slides, video, or multimedia. A department head or nursing manager may show how his or her job is important to other parts of your facility and the well being of your residents and their families.

### Provide Incremental Integration Training, Advancement, and Recognition on a Continuous Basis

- **Successful orientation is a gradual process.** An effective orientation is not completed the first day on the job. Some staff may need to slowly ramp-up to their responsibilities. For example, a newly hired certified nurse's aide will likely fail if given eight residents after five days of orientation. This new CNA may need to start with four residents, then move up to six, etc. Meet with the unit staff and ask them to be kind and patient with new staff.
- **Create career ladders.** Introduce new staff to educational and career advancement programs so that housekeepers, laundry aides and dietary aides can become CNAs; CNAs can become LPNs; LPNs can become RNs, and RNs can obtain advanced nursing degrees. Partner with community colleges and community training programs to bring English as a second language (ESL) classes to your organization. Make sure the ESL class vocabulary is specific to health care.
- **Develop recognition programs.** Employees often leave employers because they feel underappreciated. Make sure to catch new hires doing something well and praise them. Recognition programs and praising staff in long-term care facilities increases job retention and satisfaction

More *Fast Facts* available at [www.chcf.org/fastfacts](http://www.chcf.org/fastfacts).

#### References

- Castle, N.G. and J. Engberg, "Staff turnover and quality of care in nursing homes." *Med Care*, 2005. 43(6): p. 616-26.
- Karsh, B., B.C. Booske, and F. Sainfort, "Job and organizational determinants of nursing home employee commitment, job satisfaction and intent to turnover." *Ergonomics*, 2005. 48(10): p. 1260-81.
- Shemansky, C.A., "Preceptors in long-term care. 1997 NGNA innovations in practice award winner." *Geriatr Nurs*, 1998. 19(4): p. 232-4.
- Winter-Collins, A. and A.M. McDaniel, "Sense of belonging and new graduate job satisfaction." *J Nurses Staff Dev*, 2000. 16(3): p. 103-11.
- Growing Strong Roots - Peer Mentoring of CNAs to Enhance Retention and Care.* Foundation for LTC. [www.nyahsa.org/foundation](http://www.nyahsa.org/foundation)

- **Establish an employee retention committee.** The retention committee should be provided with a small budget each month to create a fun, friendly atmosphere in the workplace. This committee plans potlucks, staff birthday parties, a welcoming event for new staff, and summer cookouts. They check in with the mentors of the new hires and offer assistance if needed. Finally, in some facilities, they oversee the employee emergency loan program—small interest-free loans for car repairs, appliance repairs, etc. This is a great way to show that the organization cares about its people.
- **Focus on the critical first 90 days.** Long-term care staff turnover compromises quality health care and is highly expensive for your facility. The average cost to replace one CNA is \$2,500. For many facilities, their highest rates of turnover occur within the first 90 days of employment. High staff turnover during this time is related to ineffective new hire orientation programs.

Author: Fabio Sabogal, PhD. senior healthcare information specialist, Lumetra

Peer Review: David J. Farrell, MSW, NHA; Sandra Lourido, RN, DSD

**Copyright/Referencing Information:** Users are free to download and distribute Fast Facts for educational purposes only.

**Disclaimer:** Fast Facts provide educational information. This information is not medical, legal, or management advice. Long-term care providers should exercise their own independent judgement when adapting or adopting this information to their settings.