

Exit Interviews: Why the Last Thing They Say Means the Most

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When looking for the real reasons why staff leave your home, the best source of information is the most simple one: the departing staff members themselves. Nursing home managers who implement a firm policy of exit interviews – complete with someone to speak directly with departing staff – create a valuable source of information. Even when a direct conversation with a staff member on the way out is not possible, having a printed exit survey available can help gather pertinent information.

Interviews are most effective when they ask open-ended questions, such as those recommended in [Solving the Frontline Crisis in Long-Term Care](#). Examples include:



- Why did you decide to leave at this time?
- What factors, if any, would have made you decide to continue working here?
- What, if anything, would you change in this home if you could?
- Would you recommend this home to someone looking for work? Why or Why not?

Good exit interviews also provide departing staff with the chance to rate, by importance, different factors that contributed to their decision to leave. A working list of factors can be developed by brainstorming with your team. The list might include common reasons like:

- Commuting time
- Changes in a family situation
- Dissatisfaction with wages, benefits, or opportunities for advancement
- Problems with a supervisor or coworker
- Job stress/fatigue with the profession

More tips for a good exit interview:

1: Calculate turnover rates using this [Drill Down Tool](#) on the Primaris Web site for each position in your home. Explore this data a little further:

- a. Check the average length of employment among different groups.
- b. Look for seasonal trends. Are employees leaving during a certain time of year?
- c. Are certain age groups more prone to leave your home after a short employment period?
- d. Of those leaving for other work: are they going to other nursing homes or other fields?
- e. Are most employees leaving due to disciplinary action?

2: Using this information, ask your team to develop exit interview questions. Remember to use open-ended questions and a list of contributing factors!

3: If you haven't done so already, gather this information from as many employees as possible who left within the last three months -- especially employees identified as good coworkers by their peers. Don't ignore those employees considered difficult. You need to hear from all employees to get a complete, accurate picture.

4: Develop a process to get this information from employees who leave in the future.

5: Use page 13 of the [Staff Stability Toolkit](#) to help your team learn more about the experiences of employees working in your home.

More tips for a good exit interview (continued):

6: Ask your team to discuss their opinions and general findings about those experiences. Determine what actions to take – and which actions take priority over others.

You can also address staff retention by taking these additional steps:

1. Register now for our series of webinars. Due to popular demand, we are re-broadcasting the first session. The series covers topics including: discovering your real turnover, attracting and hiring the best, training for success, and scheduling for better results. Continuing education credit hours for nursing home administrators are available. (Already caught the first session? Register for the second session.)
2. Download and skim over the staff stability toolkit and the compendium of practices.
3. Visit the Advancing Excellence Web site for further information on staff retention. Consider signing up for this national campaign to be counted among the top performing homes in the nation.

More resources are available online! Refer to the [Staff Stability Toolkit](#) to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve retention.

Visit past RTOP Tips by going to www.primaris.org/rtop/tips. Go online today!

R-TOP Resources:

Take advantage of upcoming educational opportunities available right here in Missouri:

MU Enhanced Leadership Academy

A Certificate Program offered by Columbia's MU Sinclair School of Nursing features an innovated, evidence-based curriculum for RNs in LTC. Focusing on improving retention, this program helps prepare leaders who can create and sustain improvement by strengthening the RN-NHA relationship. **For registration information, please visit:**

<http://nursingoutreach.missouri.edu/leadership1011.htm>

Don't miss these two upcoming educational sessions, offered by the Missouri League for Nursing (for more information, visit: <http://www.mlnmonursing.org/One-Day%20Workshops>):

- Hiring and firing: what is in-between
- Leading with respect and accountability: Getting the best from yourself and others

For more information, contact a MO LANE Planning Committee Member:

Department of Health & Senior Services • Primaris • State LTC Ombudsman • MCS • Missouri League for Nursing • Missouri Center for Patient Safety • QIPMO • LeadingAge Missouri • Missouri Veterans Commission • Missouri Association of Nursing Home Administrators • Missouri Health Care Association • Missouri Board of Nursing Home Administrators • AMDA • National Association of Health Care Assistants • Missouri Pain Initiative • Heartland Kidney Network • Missouri Hospice and Palliative Care