

Address Attendance Policies

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Attendance issues are a common challenge in today's nursing home. Managers may spend a significant amount of their day dealing with scheduling rather than the direct needs of the resident. Not only does this cause a great deal of stress on the managers, but it can also frustrate staff which can impact retention. As outlined in the Staff Stability Toolkit featured on the Advancing Excellence website, one way to address high turnover rates is to invest in improving attendance and helping people meet their schedules. Remember that the basic elements to sustain good attendance are to keep scheduling fair and flexible, reward good attendance, and provide assistance and adjustments so staff can address conflicts.



Although it may seem like managers are able to temporarily fix the schedule on a day-to-day basis, the only way to truly address the problem for a long-term solution is by implementing a comprehensive approach to scheduling and attendance which includes clear communication with staff and being proactive to limit future problems.

When and How Often?

- *"We always work short!"* • *"People always call-in and they never do anything about it!"* •
- *"I don't ever get the schedule I want."* •

Do these statements sound familiar? If so, it means you have an opportunity to improve your scheduling process and improve attendance! First, it's important to let your staff know just how hard you work to replace people who have called in. By communicating to staff what efforts are taken to ensure that the home isn't short-staffed, you show them that you place their needs as a priority. There are a variety of ways to communicate with staff about attendance:

- 1) **Designate a place to write notes about questions and comments that arise about call-ins.** Keep a copy with the schedule so that your efforts in acknowledging issues is publically shared.
- 2) **Reduce phrases that spread negativity such as "We always work short" by keeping track of just how often this truly happens.** Display this in a public location so everyone can see the reality of the situation. Remember—transparency is key!
- 3) **Actively involve the retention committee** and encourage members to speak with their peers about conflicts. The goal is to facilitate a discussion that determines the reasons for call-ins, possible solutions, and to show that leadership cares about staff and residents.

Don't Wait!

For a moment think about your home's workforce—who is working in your home? What problems do they face? How can you help them? Studies show that many workers in nursing homes are single parents or grandparents who take a very active role in helping raise their grandchildren. These same workers are usually one paycheck away from a crisis and have limited support systems to turn to when their car breaks down or the babysitter is sick. **In a leadership role, you have the responsibility to understand your staff's problems and determine the best way to assist them to meet their schedule before it becomes a greater problem.** Remember:

- 1) If someone calls-in sick, seek them out the first day they are back and **let them know that he/she was missed.** You may explain how a co-worker mentioned it was better with him/her there or share a comment from a resident about how they missed the care the person provided. Acknowledging how the home needs and depends on him/her can make the difference the next time the person thinks about calling-in.

- 2) **Coach staff through attendance issues.** You can't necessarily solve a personal problem but you CAN coach people through ways to deal with barriers that impact their attendance.
- 3) **Reward good attendance and promptness.** Consider giving a small gift card, monetary compensation on paychecks, or some other means to show you value their attendance.
- 4) **Purchase an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** These programs help workers find resources they need to maintain employment.
- 5) **Consider a flexible schedule.** You may not need everyone there for a traditional shift time. Flexible scheduling can allow people to meet their personal needs and be in a better position to meet the attendance requirements.

To visit past RTOP Tips covering other areas of retention, visit:
<http://www.primaris.org/rtop/tips>

To facilitate discussion, Primaris has opened up these tips to comments from readers. Visit any tip and post comments today!

R-TOP Resources:

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

The Southeast Missouri Regional Group of Missouri Coalition Celebrating Care Continuum Change (MC5) Presents "Consistent Assignment: What Is It and Why Is It Important?" – Cape Girardeau, MO

This presentation will feature Julie Ballard, Assistant State Ombudsman, and discuss how staffing assignments can increase residents' quality of life while contributing to a more stable frontline staff. Join us on November 11th from 9AM – 11:30AM at Abbey Road Christian Church in Cape Girardeau, MO. There is NO charge to attend however registration is requested. To register, email Dave Walker at dwalker.18@hcmfield.com or call 573-243-3101.

MU Enhanced Leadership Academy – Columbia, MO

A Certificate Program offered by the 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. Tuition assistance has been made available for participants of the Academy through a Department of Health and Senior Services Grant. \$350.00 is available for RNs and \$150.00 is available for NHAs on a first come first serve basis. We encourage you to enroll quickly as space and funds are limited. For registration information, please contact Alexis Roam at aroam@primaris.org or visit: <http://nursingoutreach.missouri.edu/leadership1011.htm>

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

Department of Health & Senior Services • Primaris • State LTC Ombudsman • MC5 • Missouri League for Nursing • Missouri Center for Patient Safety • QIPMO • Missouri Association of Homes for the Aging • 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 Association

