

A RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



The direct care workforce comprises 4.5 million home health aides, personal care aides, and nursing assistants employed across a range of home and community-based settings, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, and hospitals. Direct care workers help clients with essential daily tasks, such as dressing and bathing. In addition, personal care aides may help with housekeeping and meal preparation, while home health aides and nursing assistants perform some clinical tasks, such as measuring vital signs.

What are the best ways to find and keep direct care workers in long-term care?

We hear this question frequently from employers. We hear their concerns about filling vacant jobs and reducing turnover within the workforce, whether in nursing homes or in the community. We hear their worries about maintaining care continuity for current clients and their stories about turning away prospective clients due to understaffing.

We're here to help.

For over 25 years, PHI has partnered with long-term care employers of all types to develop practical strategies for hiring—and holding onto—a workforce that is prepared and empowered to provide optimal care. Through our experience in the field, we have learned to craft interventions that address universal concerns (like training, communication, supervision, and workplace culture) but can be tailored to fit each organization's resources, priorities, and other realities.

The strategies in this guide are all rooted in the personcentered principle that individuals matter, whether we're talking about clients, family members, or employees. Screening every applicant to ensure a good fit, providing ongoing support so they can stay in the job, and recognizing their contributions and achievements are some of the ways that we ensure a targeted, person-centered approach.

Developing a successful recruitment and retention strategy takes time and effort, but even a small investment can pay off. We hope these 10 practical strategies help spark ideas about where to begin.

Recruitment and Retention in Long-Term Care: **A National Perspective**

Staffing challenges are not entirely unique to your organization—they are shaped by trends affecting long-term care employers across the country.

America is growing older.

From 2016 to 2060, the number of adults aged 65 and older will nearly double from 49 to 95 million. This means that one in four Americans will be at least 65 years old by 2060.1

The labor force is not keeping up.

During the same time period, the number of adults aged 18 to 64 will only increase by 14 percent.

The need for long-term care is widespread. Among those currently reaching retirement age, more than half (52 percent) will require longterm services at some point, and for an average of two years.2

THE COST OF TURNOVER

Estimated direct cost of replacing a nursing assistant or home care worker.

Source: Adapted from Boushey, Heather and Sara Jane Glynn. 2012. There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/16084443/ CostofTurnover0815.pdf.

Home care services are in particular demand. Due to consumer preference and policy shifts, more and more people are receiving long-term care at home.³ As a result, home care is predicted to add over one million new jobs between 2016 and 2026.4

Direct care jobs struggle to compete. Especially in a stronger economy, many workers move to other industries that offer better job quality, whether higher wages, more stable hours, safer working conditions, opportunities for advancement, or other advantages.5

Instability is common in this workforce. Conservative estimates of turnover across the long-term care sector range from 45 to at least 66 percent. One in 4 nursing assistants and 1 in 5 home health aides report that they are actively looking for another job.6

THE CAREGIVING **CRISIS: A SHARED CONCERN**

Percentage of home care providers naming "caregiver shortages" and "caregiver turnover" as two top threats facing their agencies.



CAREGIVER SHORTAGES



CAREGIVER TURNOVER

Source: Home Care Pulse. 2017. Home Care Benchmarking Study 2017. Rexburg, ID: Home Care Pulse.

STRATEGY

10 Strategies for Success

- 1. Recruit the Right Staff
- 2. Improve the Hiring Process
- 3. Strengthen Entry-Level Training
- 4. Provide Employment Supports
- 5. Promote Peer Support
- 6. Ensure Effective Supervision
- 7. Develop Advancement Opportunities
- 8. Invite Participation
- 9. Recognize and Reward Staff
- 10. Measure Progress

Recruit the Right Staff

It's not about finding the most applicants it's about finding the best ones The key to retaining a committed and well-qualified direct care workforce is to recruit the right individuals from the start—those who are most likely to succeed in the caregiving role.

Here is what you can do:

1 Involve frontline workers and supervisors

Engage your current frontline staff in planning a new recruitment strategy, developing outreach materials, or speaking to potential applicants. By seeking input from staff, you will strengthen your recruitment approach while acknowledging their value to your organization.

2 Consider the message

Design your recruitment materials to attract candidates with the right mix of attributes, values, and experiences. Be sure to lead with your organization's unique mission, and emphasize the complexity and rewards of caregiving.

3 Identify a range of potential applicants

Adapt recruitment methods and materials to reach new populations—like younger people, older adults, and men—as well as traditional candidates.



PERSONAL REFERRALS COUNT

While job advertisements may attract a lot of candidates, personal referrals lead to more hires. When one agency tracked its recruitment methods, it learned that its hiring rate was 3 percent for candidates recruited online versus 44 percent for referred candidates.

Source: Dudzinski, Tracy, Debra Schultz, and Jordan Gabrielson. 2017. "Lessons Learned from Cooperative Care Recruitment Drive." Paper presented at the National Home Care Cooperatives Conference, Dulles, VA, November 6-9, 2017. http://seniors.coop/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Lessons-Learned-from-Cooperative-Care-Recruitment-Drive.pdf.

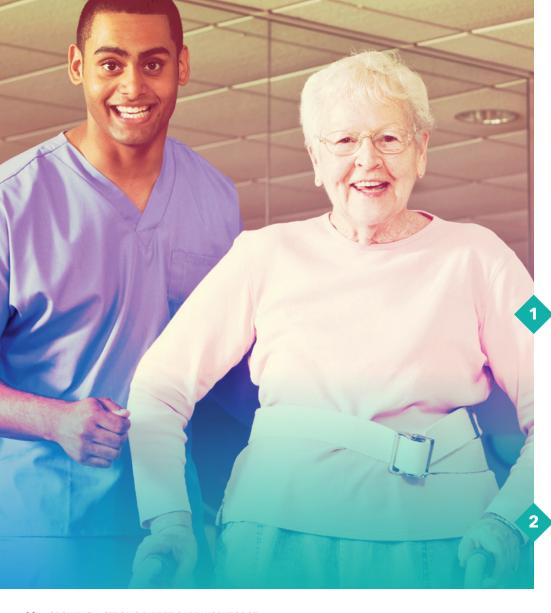
Develop targeted outreach strategies

Although broad outreach may attract a lot of candidates, it often leads to high attrition. Instead:

- ▶ **Build partnerships** with schools, colleges, workforce development organizations, and other agencies that serve unemployed or low-income workers, immigrants, younger or older workers, and others.
- ▶ **Connect personally** with potential workers through job fairs, information sessions, and other events in the community.
- ▶ Seek referrals from current employees. Consider offering a bonus for successful referrals, but make it clear that there will be no penalty for referrals that don't work out.
- ▶ **Spread the word** on social media. Reach motivated candidates (those who do extra research online) by featuring personal stories and employee reviews on your social media sites, along with your other recruitment materials.

Improve the Hiring Process

Three steps to ensure a good fit—before making an offer



Even when starting with a smaller, more selective applicant pool, a robust hiring process is essential. Be sure to build in plenty of opportunities to assess whether candidates possess the right attributes for the job and will fit well with your organization's mission and values.

Try these three steps to successful hiring:

Hold information sessions

Information sessions help candidates learn about the job and decide whether to continue the application process. By observing their interactions, you can also obtain an initial impression of a candidate's suitability for a caregiving role. If possible, ask current workers and supervisors to lead the information sessions, since they can provide the most complete and honest picture of the job; this can help reduce attrition due to misunderstandings about what the job entails.

Invite candidates to follow up

Ask candidates to call your office to schedule an interview, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their interest, initiative, and accountability.

Conduct individual interviews

Don't rely on generic questions about availability and experience. Instead, develop interview questions that elicit a candidate's core values; interpersonal skills; reliability and accountability; critical thinking and decision-making abilities; and willingness to learn. Also, discuss the types of supports that may help each candidate succeed in their new role, such as assistance with transportation, childcare, navigating the immigration system, and more.



HIRE FOR CHARACTER, TRAIN FOR SKILL

One of the most important questions to ask in a direct care interview is: "Tell me about a meaningful relationship you've had with an older person or a person with a disability, and how that relationship has impacted you." Caregiving skills can be taught, but a caring nature is essential.

Strengthen Entry-Level Training

Methods matter—
offer adult learner-centered,
culturally competent training

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With limited time and resources, direct care instructors often fall back on traditional teaching methods such as lectures, videos, reading assignments, and tests. A different approach is needed, however, to prepare trainees with the confidence and competence to succeed and stay in their jobs.⁷

Here are three steps for improving training outcomes:

Embed adult learner-centered methods

Prospective nursing assistants and home care workers bring a wealth of experiential knowledge to the classroom, but they may also have educational challenges, like limited literacy, English proficiency, or experience with formal education. With an adult learner-centered approach, instructors leverage trainees' existing knowledge and facilitate their individualized learning process—modeling the same person-centered, culturally competent approach that is expected of workers when providing care. Emphasizing experiential learning and skills development, adult learner-centered training relies primarily on interactive methods, such as role plays, case scenarios, and small-group work.



Design training around core competencies

The primary goal of direct care training should be to develop trainees' practical skills and competencies, not just impart textbook information. The building blocks of a competency-based curriculum include: client rights, ethics, and confidentiality; assistance with activities of daily living; clinical skills and infection control practices; safety and emergency protocols; and self-care. If provided in-house, training can also be adapted to include competencies related to the specific needs of your organization's clients, such as providing dementia care or taking a palliative approach.

Develop problem-solving skills

Effective communication is the foundation of strong relationships and high-quality care. Teachable communication skills include: active listening; asking clarifying questions; self-awareness of personal assumptions and biases; the ability to self-manage, including "pulling back" from immediate reactions and responses; and giving and receiving constructive feedback. By exploring, understanding, and integrating these critical interpersonal skills, trainees will be well-positioned to work effectively in teams, build relationships with their clients, address problems as they arise, and deliver person-centered care.

ADULTS LEARN BEST WHEN...

- ▶ They feel respected.
- ► The learning environment is safe and supportive.
- ▶ The content is relevant to their needs.
- ▶ Learning activities address different learning styles and challenges.
- Lessons encompass three learning domains: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Opportunities are provided for applying skills in realistic situations.

Source: Adapted from PHI. 2008. Adult Learner-Centered Training: An Introduction for Educators in Home and Residential Care. Bronx, NY: PHI. https://phinational.org/wpcontent/uploads/legacy/clearinghouse/PHI-386%20ALCT%20Guide%20(small).pdf.

Provide Employment Supports

Assist workers in overcoming obstacles to employment success

Despite their commitment, direct care workers may face significant obstacles to remaining in their jobs, such as challenges with childcare, transportation, housing, immigration, or health care. Employers can bolster retention rates by supporting workers in managing these issues.

Here is what you can do:

- ▶ Implement a process for continuously learning about your employees' needs, and cultivate contacts with community agencies to help meet those needs.
- ▶ If possible, hire an on-site counselor or job coach who can connect workers with community resources and assist them with their job-related questions.
- ▶ Let employees know about existing supports and services, and train managers, supervisors, and peer mentors to make referrals when needs arise.
- Support employees through short-term emergencies that might disrupt their abilities to conduct their work. For example, connect them to emergency loans or car repair funds, when necessary.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IS ESSENTIAL

Cultural and linguistic competence can be defined as recognition and respect for the range of factors that inform each person's values, beliefs, and practices and shape their opportunities and experiences. In broad terms, it is rooted in an understanding of the harmful effects of discrimination and inequality, and requires targeted strategies for supporting individuals and communities to overcome barriers to success. Among individuals, it requires self-reflection about one's own experiences and assumptions, and skills in cross-cultural communication and interaction. Recognizing the extensive diversity among direct care workers and their clients, it is critical to embed cultural and linguistic competence in every recruitment and retention strategy, including training methods and content, employment supports, and supervision.

Promote Peer Support

When it comes to providing quality care, peer mentors play an essential role



Peer mentorship is one of the most important ways to help new hires develop the confidence and skills to begin providing quality care.
What's more, it's a good strategy for supporting workers at any point in their careers.

Why implement peer mentorship?

Peer mentorship programs accomplish a range of goals, including:

- Supporting new hires as they transition into direct care roles.
- Helping incumbent workers manage stress and resolve challenges.
- ▶ Offering experienced workers a career advancement opportunity.
- Encouraging an organizational culture of collaboration, learning, and problemsolving.

What do peer mentors do?

- ▶ Welcome their new mentees during orientation.
- ▶ Establish a trusting relationship with their mentees.
- ▶ Provide targeted, consistent communication during their mentees' first three months on the job.
- ▶ Demonstrate quality, person-centered caregiving skills.
- ▶ Work side-by-side with their mentees to strengthen their confidence and competence.
- Help their mentees develop communication and problem-solving skills.
- ▶ Offer ongoing support, encouragement, and advice.

What organizational supports are required?

Peer mentors must receive specialized training that focuses on developing interpersonal and leadership skills, rather than clinical or task-related content. Ideally, peer mentor programs should be developed and monitored by a cross-functional oversight committee, and a program coordinator should be selected to manage the program.

PEER MENTORING: AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) is a worker-owned home care agency that has been offering training and employment to individuals in the Bronx and throughout New York City since 1985. In partnership with PHI, CHCA has developed a range of strategies to promote retention among trainees and new hires—including a peer mentorship program, which matches every new worker with a peer mentor. Peer mentors. who receive training and

additional compensation, call their mentees at least twice per week for the first 12 weeks of employment to ask about their experiences and help resolve difficulties. At times, they also attend client visits to coach their mentees in correct caregiving techniques. Peer mentoring is one important reason that CHCA's 90-day retention rate for new hires is 91 percent, compared to 73 percent for other organizations of a similar size.

Source: PHI. 2018. PHI and CHCA: Transforming Home Care Employment. Bronx, NY: PHI. Available on request from PHI.

Ensure Effective Supervision

As with person-centered care, person-centered supervision yields better outcomes

Across long-term care settings, supervisors play a pivotal role in employee retention. Like direct care workers, supervisors need proper skills training and preparation.

By learning to implement a person-centered "coaching" style of supervision, supervisors can significantly reduce disciplinary actions, boost worker satisfaction, and reduce turnover.

This approach can also improve relationships and care quality. It's important to note that a coaching style of supervision focuses on supporting workers' growth while also setting high standards for performance and accountability.

TRADITIONAL SUPERVISORS

- Raise a performance problem.
- Describe the rules, and explain the consequences of breaking them.
- Offer or mandate possible solutions.
- Require compliance, and penalize non-compliance.

COACHING SUPERVISORS

- Establish a trusting and respectful relationship with the worker.
- Raise a performance concern.
- Gather information from the worker's perspective.
- Engage the worker in generating possible solutions.
- ▶ Help the worker commit to action steps.

SUPERVISION MATTERS

In 2016, the Massachusetts Senior Care Association (MSCA) launched a pilot program in three long-term care systems to examine the effects of the PHI Coaching Supervision® training on staff stability and satisfaction. PHI's training emphasizes the core communication skills that are essential to good supervision, including active listening, self-management and self-reflection, and clear, non-judgmental communication.

The outcomes?

Better relationships between supervisors and workers, improved problem-solving, reduced disciplinary actions, better relationships with clients, and a more supportive workplace culture.

Source: Kahn, Karen. 2018. Improving Supervision for Frontline Jobs: A Massachusetts Case Study of Skilled Nursing Facilities. Waltham, MA: MSCA. https://www.maseniorcare.org/member-resources/improving-supervision-frontline-jobs-massachusetts-case-study-skilled-nursing.

Develop Advancement Opportunities

Encourage professional development—build more rungs into the career ladder

As with all employees, direct care staff need opportunities to learn and grow in their jobs; otherwise, they will start looking elsewhere for new challenges. By offering specialty training and advancement opportunities, you can maximize a worker's contribution, reward their dedication, and improve retention in the long run.

Specialty training

Effectively prepare workers to provide a higher level of care for clients—and keep them interested and engaged in their work—with specialty training opportunities. Depending on your organization's clients, topics may include: Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, behavioral health, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, diabetes, falls prevention, hypertension, palliative care, and preventing abuse and neglect, among others. As with entry-level training, specialty training is most effective when rooted in adult learner-centered methodology and designed to build on workers' knowledge, skills, and problem-solving abilities.

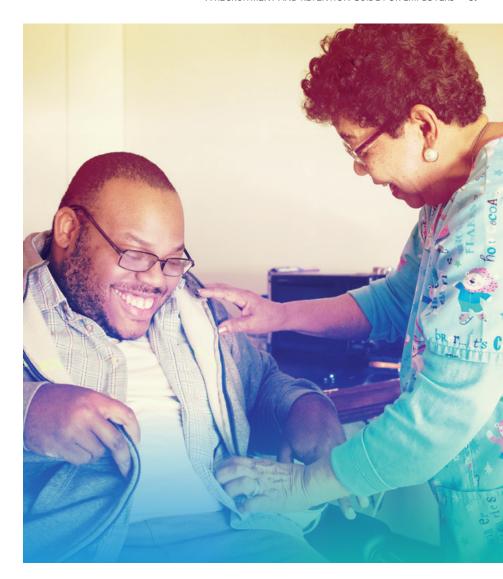
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Advanced roles

Leverage the contributions of your strongest workers—and increase their compensation to reflect their new knowledge and responsibilities—through advanced roles.

Examples include:

- ▶ Senior Aides: Provide on-the-job coaching and problemsolving support for entry-level direct care workers (and family caregivers) during care transitions or other disruptions in a client's care or health status, while also serving as a resource to the interdisciplinary care team.
- ▶ Peer Mentors: Strengthen workforce retention by providing support for new and incumbent direct care workers as they navigate personal and professional challenges associated with their employment.
- ▶ **Assistant Trainers:** Support licensed nurses in delivering entry-level or ongoing training for direct care workers, drawing from their experience to help facilitate the interactive demonstrations and skills-building sessions that are central to adult learner-centered training programs.



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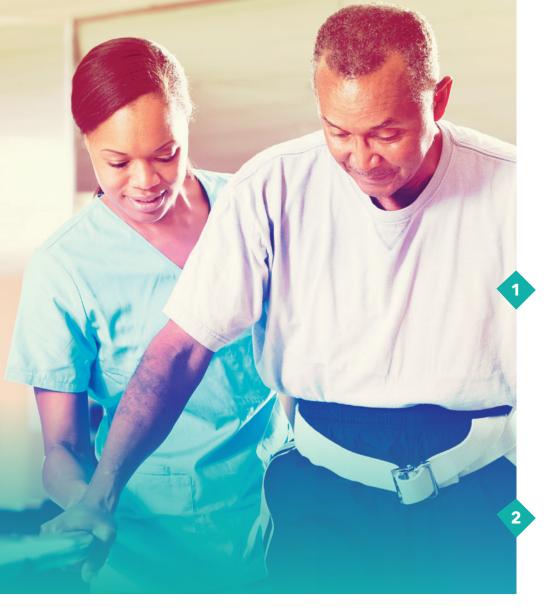
ADVANCED ROLE EXAMPLE: CARE CONNECTIONS SENIOR AIDES

The Care Connections Project, launched in 2014 by PHI with lead funding by the New York State Department of Health, created an advanced role for home care workers called the Care Connections Senior Aide (CCSA). CCSAs provide coaching and support for home care workers and family caregivers and serve on the interdisciplinary care team. When the pilot project was implemented with the managed care plan Independence Care System and three licensed home care service agencies in New York City (Cooperative Home Care Associates, JASA, and Sunnyside Community Services), the first cohort of CCSAs reported improvements in their job satisfaction, inclusion in the care team, relationships with clients and families, and communication with clinical managers—all factors that contribute to better retention. Moreover, the Care Connections pilot was associated with an 8 percent drop in the rate of emergency department visits and reduced caregiver strain among family caregivers.

Source: Scales, Kezia. 2017. Success Across Settings: Six Best Practices in Promoting Quality Care through Quality Jobs. Bronx, NY: PHI. https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/evaluation_brief_final.pdf.

Invite Participation

Employees who have a meaningful say are more likely to stay



Engaging employees in making decisions about their daily work is an important way to boost job satisfaction, performance, and commitment. It also capitalizes on their insider knowledge and insight.

Here are two ways to integrate the voices of direct care workers:

Cross-functional teams

A cross-functional team is a group of employees representing different roles and departments across the organization who work together to identify challenges and generate solutions and action plans. Cross-functional teams handle topics such as: scheduling, assignments, and workload balancing; quality improvement; care planning; and employee retention. When implementing a cross-functional team, strive to ensure meaningful and ongoing participation from direct care workers alongside organizational decisionmakers.

Learning circles

A learning circle is a way for individuals to collaboratively address a specific and usually short-term issue or concern. Any staff member should be able to convene a learning

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circle, as long as the concept is actively supported by and within your organization. For example, in a nursing home, workers on the same weekend shift might come together for a 15-minute learning circle to discuss a staffing shortage (after one of the team has "called in") and develop strategies for helping each other through the shift.



EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION BEGINS AT ORIENTATION

Your orientation program is a key opportunity to prepare individuals for their new caregiving role—and to set the tone for their engagement with your organization overall. Will they feel committed to the organization's mission? Able to speak up with questions or concerns? Empowered to make change? When building your orientation program, strive to build active participation into every component, for example:

- Discuss and reflect on your organization's mission, vision, and values.
- ▶ Talk through key organizational policies and procedures.
- ▶ Build shared understanding about the client populations that your organization serves.
- ▶ Facilitate activities that help new employees build relationships with co-workers, clients, and clients' families.
- Work with new hires to assess their knowledge and confidence, and to identify areas of need for further support or skills development.

Recognize and Reward Staff

There are many different ways to say "good job" and "thank you"

A living wage and better benefits are two essential elements for boosting recruitment and retention in direct care. However, wages are just one important piece of the puzzle. Even when operating on tight margins, you can show appreciation for your workers in a variety of ways—and these gestures make a difference.

Consider these four tips for showing appreciation8:

Recognize staff for specific actions or outcomes, not just for being a "great worker."

Highlighting specific actions or results will help your entire staff understand precisely why individuals are being honored—which, in turn, reinforces your organization's mission and care quality standards.

Implement formal recognition programs that can be monitored and improved as needed.

Although informal recognition is also valuable, it may occur inconsistently and inequitably, with quieter but nonetheless hard-working employees sometimes missing out.

3 Encourage peer-to-peer recognition.

Don't reward workers from the top down only. Peer recognition programs, whether facilitated online or on a bulletin board, allow anyone in the organization to recognize anyone else in a social, democratic way.

4 Share employee recognition widely.

Repeat success stories through your newsletters and on social media, as two examples. This way, your high-performing employees reap wider recognition and more employees learn what it means to be successful on the job.

APPRECIATION PAYS OFF

Research shows that companies with a "recognition-rich culture" experience 31 percent lower turnover rates than their peers. Additionally, 80 percent of employees overall report that recognition is an important driver of their job performance.

Source: Achievers. 2017. The Ultimate Guide to Employee Recognition: Engage, Align, and Recognize Your Employees to Inspire Success. San Francisco, CA: https://resources.achievers.com/ebooks/ultimate-quide-to-employee-recognition;

Good data can help ensure that a little investment goes a long way

A successful recruitment and retention plan begins and ends with good data. Reviewing data at regular intervals makes it possible to monitor progress, adjust your course as needed, and celebrate your achievements.

Here are three examples of how to evaluate your efforts:

Establish recruitment targets, such as the percentage of candidates who:

- ▶ call back after an information session,
- come to their interviews,
- accept a job offer,
- arrive for orientation,
- complete the onboarding process, and/or
- ▶ pass the 90-day probationary period.⁹

Focus your energy on areas where outcomes fall short of expectations.

2

Compare retention rates, turnover, employee and client satisfaction or other quality indicators before and after your organization implements a new retention strategy. Measure the impact, for example, of adding enhanced employment supports, implementing a peer mentorship program, delivering new specialty training modules, or creating an advanced role.

3

Seek feedback directly from your staff—including new and experienced workers, as well as those who are leaving—about their hiring, onboarding, and employment experiences. These insights can be collected through individual interviews, which can generate rich, indepth details; focus groups, which give a wider set of perspectives; and/or surveys, which capture input from the broadest range of employees. As well as generating useful input, directly interviewing or surveying staff helps them feel more valued and engaged in the organization, which is also a retention strategy.

STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE: WHAT TO ASK STAFF ABOUT THEIR JOB EXPERIENCES

- ▶ What do you like most about your work?
- What do you like most about this agency/ workplace?
- What is particularly challenging about your work?
- What is challenging about working in this agency/workplace?
- ► How prepared were you to start this job?
- What would have helped you feel more prepared?

- ▶ How would you describe an ideal candidate for this job?
- What qualifications or experience do you think all new caregivers need?
- ► How well do you think our current recruitment materials reflect the reality of this job?
- What would you say to a potential job candidate about this job or agency/ workplace?

Source: PHI. 2008. 12 Steps for Creating a Culture of Retention: A Workbook for Home and Community-Based Long-Term Care Providers. Bronx, NY: PHI. https://phinational.org/wpcontent/uploads/legacy/clearinghouse/12-Step%20Workbook.pdf.

PHI Services:

Transforming Long-Term Care
Through Workforce Innovations

With responsibility for delivering quality care, today's long-term care providers want to know that the women and men who provide that care share their commitment to quality—and are equipped to deliver it. To meet this need, PHI offers a range of services that help providers attract quality workers, promote excellent care, reduce turnover, and achieve cost efficiencies

- ▶ Advanced Roles. Our advanced roles approach improves the care delivered by this workforce and makes these jobs more attractive.
- ▶ Curriculum Design. Our skills-based approach and instructional methods ensure workers obtain the necessary skills to deliver optimal care.
- ▶ Household Models. We help residential leaders reimagine their living environments so they're centered on older adults.

- ▶ Organizational and Leadership Development.
 We create more effective leaders and help organizations transform their systems and structures.
- ▶ PHI Coaching Approach®. We help shift communications norms and embed coaching skills throughout an organization.
- ▶ Public Education and Messaging. We help long-term care leaders make the best possible arguments by using strong data and effective frames.
- ▶ Recruitment and Retention. We help long-term care employers find and keep the best possible candidates for direct care jobs.
- ▶ Research and Policy Analysis. We provide long-term care advocates with reliable research and policy insights to inform their local and state strategies.
- ▶ **Training.** Our training approach builds the knowledge and skills of direct care workers, from entry-level to advanced roles.

Contact us at **718.402.7766** or **info@PHInational.org** to learn more.

NOTES

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ABOUT PHI

PHI works to transform eldercare and disability services. We foster dignity, respect, and independence for all who receive care, and all who provide it. As the nation's leading authority on the direct care workforce, PHI promotes quality direct care jobs as the foundation for quality care.

Drawing on 25 years of experience working side-by-side with direct care workers and their clients in cities, suburbs, and small towns across America, PHI offers all the tools necessary to create quality jobs and provide quality care.

PHI's trainers, researchers, and policy experts work together to:

- Learn what works and what doesn't in meeting the needs of direct care workers and their clients, in a variety of long-term care settings;
- ▶ Implement best practices through hands-on coaching, training, and consulting, to help long-term care providers deliver high-quality care; and
- ▶ Support policymakers and advocates in crafting evidence-based policies to advance quality care.



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