

## STRATEGY 2:

# RECRUIT & RETAIN QUALITY STAFF



### Change Concepts

- 2.a Hire only the best fit for your organization.
- 2.b Welcome new staff – make them part of the team.
- 2.c Set high expectations - support success.
- 2.d Give the best staff a reason to stay.

### 2.a Change Concept: Hire only the best fit for your organization.

#### Action Items

- 2.a.1 Define what quality staff means to you based on your mission; describe the characteristics you are looking for.
- 2.a.2 Create job ads that highlight high standards that fit your mission, values, and culture. For example, use phrases such as “seeking qualified individuals for our team of caring, dedicated professionals possessing great interpersonal skills and a desire to make a difference every day.” Or, “at XXX we invest in our staff and we support our employees with a positive team environment, opportunities to grow, leaders who value our staff, and with competitive pay and benefits that reflect our commitment to our staff.” Consider using a quote from a staff person, resident, or family member whose story illustrates these points.
- 2.a.3 List quality achievements or awards on your website recruitment page and in your job ads as a demonstration of your commitment to quality.
- 2.a.4 Determine who needs to be involved in the hiring process based upon the position to be hired. Include opportunities for the direct supervisor, co-worker, and resident involvement in the selection process. Provide guidance for those unfamiliar with any key hiring policies.
- 2.a.5 Hire for character and interpersonal skills. Clinical skills can be strengthened, enhanced and/or taught. “Fit” is equally important to skills.
  - Have Human Resources staff conduct the first interview to focus on the “fit” (for example, determine if the applicant’s behaviors, values and ways of working with residents, families, and team members are compatible with the organization’s mission and values).
  - When hiring nurses, look for interpersonal and leadership skills in addition to clinical skills. Set the expectations that they will be assessed on all these skills on the job.
- 2.a.6 Make it clear to the candidate that you are looking for a good fit for the organization but also this is the person’s chance to determine if this is a good fit for them.

- Give the candidate a copy of your organization's mission statement and company values and ask: "Which one of these values resonates with you and tell me how you might use it in your work?"
- Ask candidates about their values. Use open-ended questions and ask them to share stories, give examples of how they have demonstrated their values. Include a question like: "What would you like to learn by working with us?" or "Describe to me what you consider to be a high quality nursing home?"
- Ask why they got into profession; why they do this work. Look for candidates who are sincerely passionate about providing compassionate care. Ask them to share about elders in their lives or residents in other jobs with whom they have formed caring relationships.

**2.a.7** Use behavioral based questions during interview, for example, ask how they have responded to or would respond to different situations that arise in nursing homes.

**2.a.8** Ask about aspirations for personal and professional growth. This sends the message you want them to grow with your organization. Describe how you are able to provide opportunities for this growth.

**2.a.9** During the hiring process explain that ideas for performance improvement are solicited from residents, family and staff.

**2.a.10** As part of the screening process, bring candidates to the area where their work would be to see how they respond to those who live and work there.

## 2.b Change Concept: Welcome new staff – make them part of the team.

### Action Items

**2.b.1** Welcome new staff by creating opportunities for them to get to know co-workers and residents. Help them to establish relationships immediately to feel comfortable in the workplace and support their successful transition into employment. For example, have a welcome gathering, share a meal, share information about a new person; have new staff meet residents and co-workers in the area where they will be working and spend part of their day involved in the daily flow of life in their area.

**2.b.2** Ensure continuity and consistency of high expectations is carried through all aspects of orientation. Review value-based expectations during orientation. For example: "Employee works cooperatively and collaboratively with staff from other departments."

**2.b.3** Have new employees complete a skill-based competency test that includes their individual clinical/technical and leadership skills as appropriate. Follow up and provide support on areas of need.

**2.b.4** Provide employees with the tools and training they need in order to do their job well. Pace the orientation to stage the information so that people can absorb it and apply it.

- Check-in with new employees immediately and once a week for their first few weeks to discuss and build on their work experiences of the week. The first day and the first week are crucial in keeping new staff.
- Encourage new staff to ask questions, and take the time to answer thoroughly and thoughtfully. Give them timely feedback, find out what help they need, and intervene quickly to support their success.
- Make the length of orientation flexible, based upon the individual's needs, in order to develop strong employee orientation practices.

**2.b.5** Schedule a 30-45-90 day follow-up interview by Human Resources to find out what support, additional

training, etc. is needed. Get and give feedback from/to the manager.

- 2.b.6** Assign a “buddy” or “mentor” for new staff to help them learn about the culture and “how we do things here.” Ensure the mentor is someone who represents the organization’s mission and values in their attitude and work, and is available to support the new staff member through the challenging first months of a new position. Treat the mentor program seriously by having a selection process, a support system, and payment/other compensation for the extra responsibilities involved. Provide mentors with the training they need to know how to teach to the new employee’s learning style and provide the support mentors need to address any issues or needs they identify for a new employee.
- 2.b.7** Have staff shadow other disciplines during orientation so that they see how their role interacts with others and they know what everyone needs to do to make the household run. This will foster a higher level of understanding and appreciation among staff members of separate departments.
- 2.b.8** Create opportunities for new staff members to work together as a team on a daily basis through daily huddles and team problem-solving.

## 2.c Change Concept: Set high expectations - support success.

### Action Items

- 2.c.1** Tie and reinforce value-based expectations in performance appraisals. For example, look for or ask about examples where the individual demonstrated flexibility, independence and initiative while fostering a cooperative, caring attitude among staff.
- 2.c.2** Measure leaders’ performance by the performance of their teams. Define expectations that include helping direct reports perform at their best and have the resources they need to do so.
  - Coach and support supervisors so they provide effective, caring supervision and leadership for employees.
- 2.c.3** Conduct annual skills testing for all departments. Make it engaging and expect all staff to participate.
- 2.c.4** Set the expectation that all staff responds to resident needs and requests, whether or not they are assigned to work in that specific neighborhood. Make it a standard that everyone (all staff, including the management team) answers call lights – most requests do not require certification).
- 2.c.5** Solicit staff feedback on staffing to ensure adequate help and respond to needs that emerge.
- 2.c.6** Use formal (staff satisfaction surveys) and informal (rounding) means to gain feedback on the quality of care and respond to needs that emerge. Satisfaction survey responses provide “the tip of the iceberg” – follow-up with focus groups to clarify concerns and identify appropriate interventions.
- 2.c.7** Create opportunities for the voices of staff to be heard. People feel valued when their opinions and ideas count. Before initiating change in the organization, meet with any staff and residents/families that will be impacted by the change in order to gain their support, buy in, and get their feedback. This sends an important verbal and non-verbal message that the organization believes they have valuable information to contribute towards making the organization excel.



## 2.d Change Concept: Give the best staff a reason to stay.

### Action Items

- 2.d.1** Look for ways to support the financial well-being of staff, recognizing that when staff's basic needs are met, they are able to perform at their best because they are not as worried about how to make ends meet.
- Ensure your compensation and benefits are competitive in your marketplace.
  - Provide health insurance.
  - Provide free or low cost snacks and/or meals for staff.
  - Help staff with cash flow by implementing weekly paychecks.
  - Offer financial literacy education, savings plans, no-cost loans, 401(k) plans, etc.
  - Provide confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- 2.d.2** Provide opportunities for flexible schedules and work environment so that individuals are able to better balance work, education, and family/home needs. Do so in ways that strengthen consistency of assignments by structuring consistent back-ups and flexibility in residents' daily schedules.
- 2.d.3** Make sure the schedule is distributed well in advance, is consistent and predictable so staff can plan, and allows for adequate rest between work days and continuity in care. Honor staff requests for days off and allow staff to arrange to trade days while maintaining limits on overtime, and promoting consistent assignment.
- 2.d.4** Support staff in their professional development. For example, encourage and support continuing education, provide scholarship programs, reimbursement for time at conferences; pay percentage of tuition, provide in-services, or provide training on English as a second language (residents can help with this training).
- 2.d.5** Implement succession planning; identify internal staff members with the potential to fill key leadership positions and provide them with development experiences. For example, involve them in projects or team efforts that enhance their problem solving and strategic planning skills.
- 2.b.6** Look for fun ways to foster a sense of family and community. (For example, the staff on each floor/unit decorates a pumpkin for Halloween and the residents vote for the best, or each department creates a "theme gift basket" for the holidays for a raffle, or staff members work together to create activities or decorations for a themed Nursing Home Week.)

*Use this extra space to jot down brilliant ideas and action items!*

