

## Providing On-the-Job Support for Newly Hired Nursing Assistants

A large percentage of nursing assistants quit during the first three to six months on the job citing lack of support as the primary reason. Strong orientation programs of sufficient length and continued support within a stable team are key to reducing turnover of new hires.

### Goals

- To give new workers the support and training they need to become confident when doing the job.
- To help new workers become supportive of the organization and enjoy caring for residents and working with others.
- To offer assistance to workers who need help in overcoming barriers to maintaining employment.

### Reasons Why Staff May Not Have a Positive Experience After Hire

1. Unresolved friction may exist between newly hired nursing assistants and the residents they care for, their coworkers, or their supervisors.
2. New nursing assistants may provide less than quality care due to difficulties in handling the pressure of the fast-paced environment and adjusting to residents' individual needs.
3. Nursing assistants may lack skills to handle stressful situations and manage their time.
4. Nurse supervisors frequently do not see CNA supervision as part of their job description. Busy handling heavy workloads of their own and dealing with the fallout from scheduling issues, they tend to devote little time to supervising nursing assistants except to intervene in a crisis.
5. Nurse supervisors generally lack training or support in how to manage staff. The feedback they provide to nursing assistants is often punitive, and the opportunity to help them overcome challenges that may be keeping them from being reliable employees is lost.
6. Experienced staff often ignore or undermine new staff rather than offer them support.
7. Many nursing assistants have family responsibilities outside of work and few resources to accomplish them, creating tension between work and personal obligations.

### Orientation for Retention

1. Include active learning instead of a check-off. Remember that adults retain mores as active, engaged learners than as passive learners.
2. Break up the sitting still in a classroom with moving around such as a scavenger hunt.
3. Pay attention to the classroom atmosphere. Make it welcoming and comfortable.
4. Act as warmly as you would if you are welcoming someone into your home. Serve food and drinks when possible.
5. Establish relationships right away. Have them to lunch with the administrator and coworkers. Include a resident in the welcoming process.
6. Do not move new staff around. Keep their assignments stable.

### Organizational Support for Nursing Assistants

1. A peer mentor program with senior nursing assistants who have received training with a job description and are given time to interact with and support new staff.
2. Frequent in-service meetings for new employees with a focus on interpersonal communication, relationship building, stress management, and problem-solving skills.

3. Regular and frequent check-ins with new hires to determine progress and comfort level with responsibilities with added time in orientation if necessary.
4. Formal training for everyone charged with supervisory duties.
5. Organization-wide adoption of a supportive supervisory approach.
6. A redesign of supervisory staff job responsibilities to allow time for effective supervision, which includes relationship building, positive reinforcement, and correction.
7. An employee assistance program to help eligible workers access needed social and supportive services.
8. Food pantry and clothes exchange are two staff assistance programs which will benefit all staff.

### **Measurement of Outcomes**

- Turnover rates of nursing assistants within first three months and first six months of employment
- Unscheduled absences
- Resident satisfaction of those cared for by new hires
- Staff satisfaction

Adapted from [www.BandFConsulting.com](http://www.BandFConsulting.com).