

Questions for LTSS Providers re: Best Practices for Recruitment & Retention of Direct Care Workers

Responses submitted by Leslie Gilman, Executive Director of SarahCare of Jenkintown

Outreach Committee

- **How have you worked to improve recruitment and retention within the current financial constraints of the long-term services and supports system?** One barrier to recruitment is the cost of physicals and PPDs. It would be great if this could be offered somewhere at no cost. We do offer the PPD to potential employees if absolutely necessary. For retention, the most important thing is to keep communicating with employees so they feel in the know and working toward agency goals. Also to keep showing respect to and appreciation of employees as well as providing annual increases.
- **In trying to attract new employees, have you found or developed any nontraditional recruitment methods? If so, please explain.** We use the usual job fairs and Indeed advertising. We promote that it is just day shift, since it is for a day care center.
 - Are you partnering with anyone in your community (e.g., public schools, community colleges, etc.) in doing outreach to potential workers? If so, please describe these partnerships. Not at this time although our day care center is connected to a home care agency and we recruit together
- **What was your baseline retention rate before you implemented these practices/approaches and what is it currently? Please describe the timeframe involved.** We have a pretty strong retention rate.
 - **How has your retention changed over the last year?** Has not really changed.
- **Are you seeing any cultural shifts/demographic changes in terms of who is entering the direct care worker field? If so, how has that changed your approach to recruitment and retention?** We currently see a mix of cultures applying for our positions. In particular we have recently recruited some Spanish speaking staff since we have some Spanish speaking participants.

Access Committee

- **What kind of training do you provide to your direct care workers, both initially and on an ongoing basis?**
 - **Do you provide training beyond the minimum requirements? If so, please explain.** We provide a comprehensive orientation for all staff as well as ongoing training beyond the minimum requirements. The orientation includes time spent w/registered nurse to better understand participant needs, then time spent w/Activities Director to gain better understanding of activities and finally they shadow another employee. Inservice training is monthly and mandatory. In addition, all staff receive CPR and First Aid. Staff view training as positive because it helps them with their interactions with participants.
- **How far in advance do your workers receive their work schedules, particularly those working in home care? Are they able to get regular fulltime hours if that is their preference and desire?** Staff schedules for day care employees are provided to staff monthly. Upon recruitment staff are selected based on the hours they can work and shifts needed and are matched to be sure the employment arrangement is a workable situation.
- **According to the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, the median hourly wage for Pennsylvania's direct care workforce is \$11.59, with a \$10.90 median hourly wage for home care workers and a \$13.45 median hourly wage for nursing aides. How do these wages compare to your workers?** Our day care rate for CNA's with experience is about \$12.50/hr. We also hire HHA's for about \$11/hr.
- **What effect do wages have on your ability to recruit and retain employees?** Wages are important but not the only thing. Many potential employees approach our day care because they have worked for Home Care Agencies and lost hours when the cases changed or patient passed and they did not like having inconsistent income and not enough hours. In day care we can offer steady often FT work.

- **What types of benefits and employee assistance programs do you offer your direct care workers?** We offer a full array of benefits (health, dental, vision, life, etc) but often employees cannot afford with their low wages. Our company has tried to offer different plans/levels of health insurance so employees can choose a lower level benefit plan which they are able to afford. We also give them a discount for using our adult day services.
- **Do you conduct exit interviews when a direct care worker leaves your organization? If so, what percentage of workers participate in these interviews or questionnaires? What are the typical reasons why they choose to leave? Have you noticed any themes as to why direct care workers leave and, if so, what are they?** Most have left for either more \$ or because they relocated out of the area. Aides can earn up to \$18/hr working in a large teaching hospital in the city.

Quality Committee

- **How do you solicit direct care workers' input into the best practices you develop and employ? Is that an ongoing process?** We have stand-up staff meetings and keep staff informed and solicit staff ideas daily.
- **How do you develop person-centered care plans for direct care workers to follow in home care? Are direct care workers involved in the development and evaluation of these plans?** Our registered nurses and Activities Director create participant care plans with input from DCWs.
- **What are your thoughts on the utilization of technology to support direct care workers? How does your organization utilize technology to assist and empower these workers?** Technology at center includes electronic timeclock for employees to clock in with fingerprint, secure building with keypad to keep participants from wandering, and automatic doors which open w/touchpad so they can escort participant easily.
- **Please explain how your organization recognizes and rewards direct care worker employees?** We provide periodic lunches for staff and holiday bonuses and party. We also recognize staff in front of their peers when receiving good feedback from families. Also provide lunchroom for staff with free coffee and tea as well as a comfortable seating area w/vending machines. Also separate staff bathrooms.
- **What is approach your approach to teambuilding and creating a supportive work environment for direct care workers?** Executive Director's office door is always open. Daily stand-up meetings. Keeps staff in the loop and feeling comfortable making suggestions.

Workforce Committee

- **What specific practices have been key to retaining direct care workers in your organization? What specific recruitment techniques have you found to be successful?** Frequent communication and matching hours to their schedules usually works the best. We provide benefits, staff lunchroom, private staff bathrooms, periodic staff lunches catered in and we also recognize 5 yrs of service with a Gucci watch.
- **Please walk us through the baseline problem(s) you were trying to address and the process you developed to identify solutions. What was the timeframe from start to finish? How do you measure the success of your efforts? Is this an ongoing process in your organization?** Must be diligent with employee rates, rate increases, benefits, recognition and maintaining communication with staff.
- **When you looked at retention and recruitment, did you identify any cultural changes that needed to be made in your organization? If so, what were they?** Not really. Our experience is that all cultures seem to appreciate same benefits.
- **Does your organization have multiple locations throughout the state or provide care and services throughout the long-term services and supports continuum (e.g., home care, assisted living, skilled nursing facility, etc.)? If so, were you able to replicate best practices among these different locations/ provider types or were there**

unique differences which required distinctive approaches? Please explain. We also provide home care in addition to adult day care. Recruitment for both together is helpful.

- **What are your thoughts on the changing labor market and pool of available applicants as it relates to the direct care worker field? Are you learning anything new that will alter your current recruitment/retention practices in the future? If so, please explain?** There is a shortage of DCW's and Day care is a more efficient service than home care. Home Care is 1:1 ratio whereas adult day care is a 1:5 ratio. With the growing number of elderly, there will not be enough DCWs to do 1:1 with all. Adult day is a more practical way to staff.
- **Have you implemented any nontraditional types of benefits (e.g., compensatory time, flextime, personal leave, etc.)? if so, what are they and have they been successful in improving the recruitment and retention of DCWs?** Gucci watch is given to employees after 5 years! Staff really like this.
- **What are the barriers to maintaining the successes you have achieved with recruitment and retention?** DCW needing more \$ sometimes leave. Facility is limited to level of DCW pay by the daily revenue of adult day services which has not been increased in 7years!
- **How do the pay/benefits and incentives (both traditional and nontraditional) your organization provides to DCWs compare to other providers in your area?** We provide more than most.