

Executive White Paper Series, February 2017

## **The Hiring Imperative for Senior Care Providers**

Why Staffing is About to Become the Foremost Challenge  
Across the Post-Acute Continuum of Care



## Senior Care Providers Are Poised for Growing Pains

The National Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 4 out of the top 6 fastest growing jobs over the next seven years will be in Post-Acute Care.<sup>1</sup> These jobs offer lower wages and greater workloads than entry level opportunities in other sectors like technology or manufacturing. Furthermore, staff already working in post-acute care are leaving their posts at alarming rates. The wave of Baby Boomers expected to leave the workforce is no longer just coming. It is here. These converging factors are making an already challenging environment even more so.

**Staffing the same way it has always been done will not be enough.**

## Staffing Challenges: A Long Time Coming

These challenges didn't just come about recently. The seeds for today's hiring issues were sewn years ago. This white paper takes a look at how we got to where we are today.

## 2008 **Five-Star Quality Rating System Acknowledges Staffing Concerns**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services launched the Five-Star Quality Rating System on their Nursing Home Compare site which includes quality star ratings for staffing data. The goal of this new system is to help families and residents make more informed decisions about high and low performing nursing homes and to help providers identify areas for improvement. It is a public acknowledgment of the impact of staffing on the quality of care.

## 2012 **AHCA & NCAL Advocate Staff Stability**

With its annual staffing report, the American Health Care Association (AHCA) sounds the alarm in early 2012. Studies conducted by the organization show employee turnover and staff vacancies are on the rise, while the annual retention rate for caregivers is falling. The report concludes with:

The increase in turnover and vacancy rates and the decrease in retention rates demonstrate a need for additional focus on staff stability in America's skilled nursing care centers.<sup>2</sup>

To this end, AHCA establishes the Quality Initiative, issuing an industry-wide edict to reduce turnover among nursing staff and other frontline caregivers by 15% or more by March 2015. The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) follows suit, aligning staff stability targets for members with AHCA.<sup>3</sup>

## 2014 **Congress Passes IMPACT Act To Improve Transparency**

With the passage of the Improving Medicare Post-Acute Care Transformation Act of 2015, patient data used in skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, long-term care facilities, and inpatient rehab centers is required to be standardized to improve quality of care and coordination across post-acute care settings.

## 2015 **AHCA Revises Quality Initiative, Lowers Target Outcome**

Three years after launching its bold Quality Initiative, AHCA revisits its original goals for the program, lowering the bar for staff stability while expanding the Initiative's scope to other target areas. Providers are now expected to lower turnover rates among nursing staff by 15% or achieve a turnover rate of 40% or less by March 2018.<sup>4</sup>

## 2016 **CMS Implements Payroll-Based Journal**

In an effort to help keep consumers informed of staffing levels in nursing homes, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services introduces the Payroll-Based Journal.<sup>5</sup> The data collected via PBJ can be used by consumers to not only research the level of staff in nursing homes, but also look up employee turnover and tenure. To ensure accuracy, this information is fully auditable, replacing the honor-based system previously used to determine a facility's rating in the Five-Star Quality Rating System and Nursing Home Compare. Though there are hiccups in the beginning of the process, the majority of providers are able to successfully meet the new requirements.

## 2017 **Despite Incentives, Core Staffing Challenges Remain**

Even as incentives for improved staffing practices are put in place, the core problem of finding and keeping good caregivers intensifies. A change in White House administration leaves many wondering whether CMS will hold the line on the new regulations. The fact remains, post acute care providers must attract and hire quality staff to deliver the best patient and resident outcomes, regardless of whether regulations demand it.

## Finders Keepers

In a recent staff recruitment and retention survey conducted jointly by LeadingAge and Vikus, 71% of providers indicated their biggest challenge with hiring was not having enough people apply. 75% said nursing assistants and front-line caregivers were the most challenging roles to fill.

In response, some providers have ramped up advertising with local newspapers and other traditional media outlets, with little success. As a result, 94% of providers have rushed to get their job postings listed on line on popular job boards to attract candidates<sup>6</sup>. While the job boards have provided a steady flow of candidate resumes and profiles, over 75% of job seekers report they hear nothing back from the employer after they submit their information<sup>7</sup>. Employers report a similar number of the resumes they receive contain false or misleading information<sup>8</sup>. And as the cost of on line job posting and advertising grows, providers are beginning to wonder where they are going to have to look next.



76% of providers say filling open positions in 2016 was more challenging than 2015



93% of providers say they need to make a change to improve employee retention

## The Best Care Begins With The Best Hires

The key to finding and retaining good caregivers is in **structuring the hiring and selection process**. From start to finish, hiring needs to be streamlined, simple, and enable clear communication between hiring managers, HR staff, and job seekers. Here are some important areas of hiring to consider:

- Have you identified the skills, qualifications, and competencies needed for each position?
- Do you have a quick way to post openings to the top free job boards along with your own searchable Careers page?
- Is your recruiting process in alignment with your organization's goals as well as the requirements imposed by regulatory entities?
- Are you assessing key competencies as part of your application process in order to improve your hiring decisions and ultimately impact the quality of care provided to your residents?
- Are hiring managers equipped with standard interviewing questions based on each job in your organization?
- Are your new hires equipped with key learning items, including culture and skills?
- How well connected is your hiring process to your other business functions, including clinical, payroll, HR, and time keeping?
- Do managers have necessary analytics and Key Performance Indicators for continuous improvement of your hiring process to impact goals?

## It's Never Too Late

Providers in the post-acute care continuum need to adopt improved hiring practices to overcome the staffing challenges ahead. Attracting talented staff and caregivers is possible, and the industry doesn't have to settle for the bleak reality of high staff turnover. By engaging staff and making good investments in the hiring process, senior care providers can make an incredibly positive impact on their residents and their families. The best care is truly what it is all about ■

## About Vikus

Vikus Hiring Software is used in over 2,000 post-acute and senior care locations across the United States. Vikus's web-based product helps providers attract and retain all levels of staff - from front-line caregivers to leadership at the home office. Vikus Hiring Software is built specifically for senior care providers, making it easy and intuitive to manage the entire hiring process online. Pair easy-to-use software with unprecedented customer service and access to industry experts, and it is easy to see why Vikus is the leading provider of Hiring Software for healthcare organizations across the post-acute care continuum.

To learn more about Vikus, visit [www.vikus.com](http://www.vikus.com) or click here to watch a Vikus Product Tour.

## About Senior Living 100

The Senior Living 100 Leadership Conference is exclusively for C-level executives from leading AL/IL and CCRC organizations. To register for the 2017 Senior Living 100 Conference, taking place March 5-8 at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, please visit [www.seniorliving100.com](http://www.seniorliving100.com).

## References

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