

Boosting Staff Morale During the Pandemic

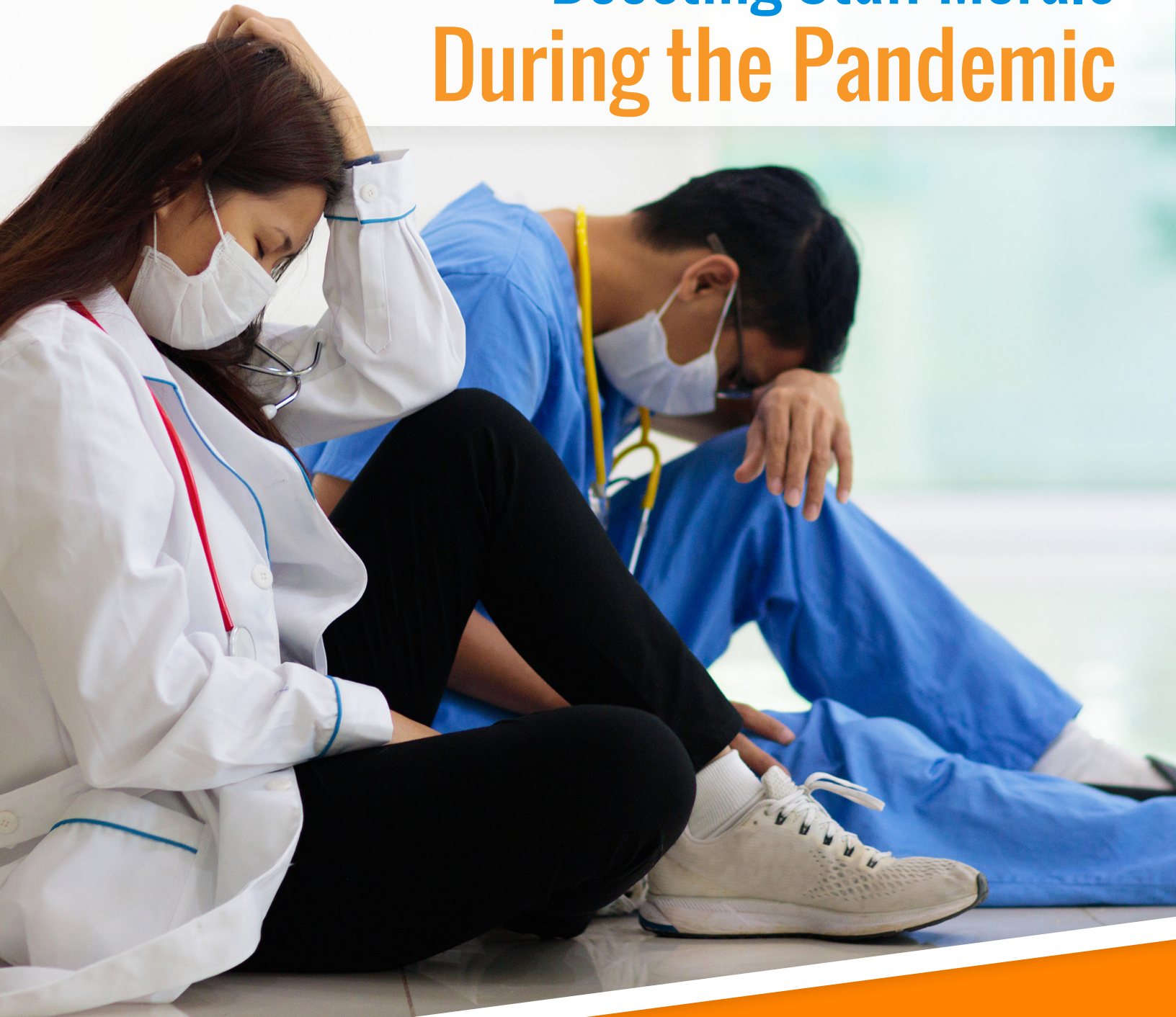


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What You'll Learn

While some assisted living communities have faced crises before like natural disasters, nothing could have prepared the industry for the COVID-19. And it is taking a toll on employees. From concerns about their own health to the high number of fatalities in long-term care settings, it has been challenging for staff to remain positive during the COVID-19 pandemic. ***Learn the ways you can help lift morale right now for both short-and long-term benefits to your community.***



Impact of COVID-19 On Staff Morale

From the outset, the transmission and spread of COVID-19 in the long-term sector has been difficult for staff. Employees have faced unique challenges daily since the virus first appeared in a facility in Washington, **including:**

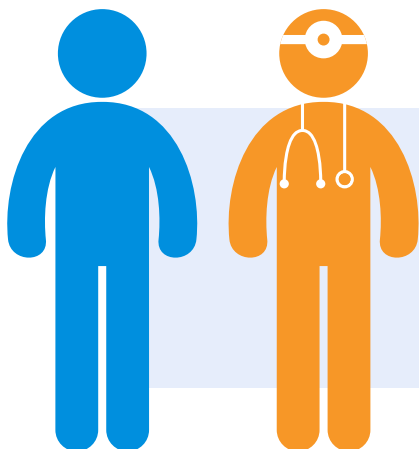
- Evolving protocols and work restrictions
- Shortages of testing and personal protective gear
- Exhaustion and burnout
- High fatality rates among residents
- Fear of contracting the virus



It is no surprise that the pandemic is adding to the stress levels of many employees while at work. And this can have devastating consequences on their morale, including pronounced feelings towards their employer **such as:**

- Anger
- Resentment
- Lack of support

Compounding these emotions are staff shortfalls, especially in hard-hit communities with high rates of infection among employees or in those already struggling to attract workers before the pandemic struck. However, communities can employ strategies to help improve employees' outlook despite the circumstances.



Most of the
4.5 million
LTC workers are in close, frequent contact with patients.

- Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)

Ways Your Community Can Drive Employee Engagement

The longer COVID-19 persists, the greater the risk to staff satisfaction. While some factors may be out of a community's control, **there are proactive steps that can help alleviate worker frustration.**

- **Foster Camaraderie:** Encourage a sense of team work, communication and problem solving among staff, and remind them to focus on what they are able to do together to effectively keep residents and themselves safe.

- **Encourage Residents to Show Appreciation:** Suggest that residents show their appreciation for community staff with letters, signs, songs or other “thanks you” gestures

- **Be Accessible:** Make sure community leadership remains visible and accessible throughout the crisis and even fills in if necessary.

- **Communicate:** Help workers feel important by reaching out with regular communication, from daily staff updates to one-on-one meetings with management - even short check-ins matter.

- **Encourage Staff Contributions:** Solicit staff input into planning efforts so they feel acknowledged.

- **Increase Flexibility:** Support employees with added work flexibility to manage workloads. If you have uncovered shifts, consider bringing in agency staff to cover. And be empathetic and more lenient with community policies like tardiness.





- **Listen:** Build good will by listening when employees want to talk. Remain calm, answer what you can and be as honest as you can about rumors about things like layoffs or declining occupancy.

- **Offer Free Perks:** Free meals or snacks can help improve the mood of workers and make them feel valued. Some communities have even provided groceries for them to take home or hard-to-find necessities like toilet paper. Others are funding childcare.

- **Consider Incentive Pay:** Some communities are offering extra pay per hour or shift or more for picking up shifts as appreciation pay.

- **Hold Theme Days:** From scheduling fun dress-up days to holding contests or celebrating employee milestones during COVID-19, look for opportunities to brighten the work day with events staff can look forward to.

The assisted living industry will need to fill
1.4 million job openings
by the year 2025.

- Argentum

The COVID-19 crisis will not last forever but the effects on staff can linger. And in an industry already struggling with turnover, it's important to be proactive and engage workers to protect the future viability of your community.

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