

Partners in **NURSE ADVANCEMENT**

OUR MISSION

Partnering to enhance nurse competencies and advancement in assisted living environments through education.

What is your role at AALNA?

As the Director of Member Services, I recruit assisted living nurses to join our organization as members and, at the same time, encourage them to become state leaders, who are our designated representatives with a voice at the state level and also have the opportunity to start a state chapter if one doesn't exist. These added roles would give them the opportunity to meet and network with nurses from throughout their state, especially when they take turns hosting monthly meetings at various communities so they can get a different perspective of what others offer to residents.

What brought you to AALNA and how long have you been with the organization?

I've been with AALNA for about 12 years. The organization was in its infancy stage at the time and trying to build its membership. While serving on the NCAL board, presenting on assisted living issues at both state and national levels, I was invited to become an AALNA board member. I was eager to use the contacts I had made to help grow AALNA.

The board of AALNA is made up strictly of nurses with strong and varied backgrounds who are pioneers or well-seasoned nurses working when assisted living began. We all have the desire to advanced nurses' careers in this specialty field and believe the support we provide can help accomplish that very goal.

Describe AALNA's mission.

Our primary focus is to continually promote healthy nursing practice by enriching nurses' competencies and educate and advance nurses into strong leadership roles. We provide sound education that's applicable to their daily work in assisted living, certifications for RNs and LPNs, best practices, and networking opportunities.

What drives you in your role and how do you try to impact the assisted living industry?

While education is key, we also want to help nurses get the respect they

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– Deb Choma, RN,
Director of Member Services,
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deserve. Many residents have to drastically downsize before moving into an assisted living community, and leave behind friends and neighbors. They may have lost their spouse or partner, are dealing with several comorbidities, and need a large amount of support from the nurses. On top of that, the nurses have a huge responsibility not only to the residents but their team members as well. They work 24/7, holidays, and weekends. Their plates are too full and they don't always feel valued. One of our goals is to be a forum for them and continually educate them to become leaders in our arena.

How is AALNA helping to address the staffing shortages within assisted living communities?

When members hear and see how other communities operate in a way that successfully supports nurses, they can share those examples with their communities and advocate for hiring of additional staff. Ultimately, it's in a community's best interest to ease the burden on the nurses and provide them with appropriate staffing patterns because when they have too much on their plate, there's a greater risk of errors, and that doesn't benefit the community, staff, or residents.

One of the things that I'm passionate about is helping address the poor staffing patterns in assisted living. I have worked in assisted living communities for 22 years, owned my own community, and have been a travel nurse, and recognize how short-staffed many communities really are. This alone causes early burnout for nurses. We strive to educate nurses to be in a leadership role and to become an advocate for other nurses in this area.

How is the partnership between PharMerica and AALNA helping to further AALNA's impact?

Together, we can work to increase knowledge base of med techs and nurses and provide education and clinical programs with advanced learning for them. In many communities, especially smaller communities, the med techs are administering meds. By giving them the knowledge they need about administration and side effects, they can be instrumental in freeing up the nurses and ensuring continued quality of care in assisted living.

To learn more about how PharMerica is supporting DONs, other nurse leaders, and nursing staff in assisted living, visit PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement.

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