

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 and at The Aspenwood Company?

At AALNA, I'm a member of the Board of Directors. The value I bring to the organization stems from my experience as a front-line corporate nurse working out in the field. Because I'm in the trenches, I'm able to share first-hand and timely knowledge and insights with AALNA about the assisted living industry such as regulatory changes, best practices, and key nursing leader challenges like staff retention.

With The Aspenwood Company, my current position is vice president of clinical operations, focusing on high-quality senior living communities in Texas, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee. I'm out in the field to ensure communities are compliant with policies, help nurse managers understand their budgetary responsibilities, oversee risk management activities like falls program, and observe front-line staff to make sure residents are cared for properly. Part of this involves training with these front-line team members so they understand their roles and responsibilities, especially when they're new to the assisted living industry. With the workforce struggles the industry faces, more than ever, we're having to hire those without experience in assisted living, and that requires training from the bottom up.

What brought you to AALNA?

I first joined AALNA as a member of the organization 10 years ago. At the time, I was a long-term care consultant. I truly believe that the only way you can keep up with regulatory changes is to join an association like AALNA, so you can hear about what's going on, learn best practices, and become Assisted Living Nurse certified (C-AL). With mentoring, support, and encouragement from Deb Choma, RN, Director of Member Services for AALNA, I later took on a larger role and became a state leader for AALNA in Texas and started a new state chapter. About two years ago, I became a Board member.

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**– Barbara Bierstedt,
RN, C-AL**

*Vice President of
Clinical Operations,
The Aspenwood Company;
Member, AALNA Board of
Directors*

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Describe AALNA's mission.

To me, the mission is to provide nurses in assisted living with best practices, educate on potential regulatory changes at the federal level so communities can prepare, provide resources on the website, offer certifications so nurses can become certified in assisted living, and give guidance and support to nurses in the industry.

What keeps you up at night in the industry?

There are two things: nursing shortages and the lack of experienced nurses in assisted living.

How can AALNA help with staffing shortages in assisted living?

Indirectly, we help nurses and nursing leaders stay on top of the latest clinical and regulatory information so they can do their jobs more compliantly, with greater efficiency, and in a way that delivers the best care to residents. When nurses are satisfied in their jobs, they're more likely to stay in their role, so that's one way we're hoping to make an impact on retention. Directly, we help with recruiting. On the AALNA website, we have a career section with job postings where communities can list their positions. Nurses who are interested in a job in assisted living can find opportunities that may be a match for them.

How can the PharMerica and AALNA partnership have the greatest impact?

One thing I think could benefit communities is to stress the ways that the consultant pharmacist can help. The consultants are another set of eyes so they can assist with observation. They can provide on-site, in-person education. They can help reduce risk such as medication errors by providing training, especially in states where med techs are allowed to pass medications. Together, I think AALNA and PharMerica could educate communities on the value of the role of the consultant pharmacist and how organizations can leverage this professional to elevate their practices.

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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