



## THE NEW ASSESSMENT: Tips to Ease Recruitment and Retention Challenges

As of August 8, facilities must complete a new facility assessment designed to inform staffing decisions for each shift and for the resident population overall. This, in part, calls for developing and implementing a recruitment/retention plan to ensure adequate trained staff to manage every resident, including those with special needs such as respiratory care or wound management.

As facilities look to develop these plans, it's important to consider new opportunities to attract and keep nurses in the field. That's because it's not enough to advertise job openings and hope that nursing professionals choose long-term care over their many options. "We can't count on people to come into the field serendipitously like so many have in the past. We have to use our experience and connections to appeal to students and nurses coming from other fields," said Karen McDonald, BSN, RN, Vice President, Chief Clinical Officer, Mission Health.

At the same time, she suggested, it is essential to work to retain the nurses we have, providing them opportunities for advancement, training on new skills, education, and other benefits that give them recognition and respect and help them have a work-life balance and less stress.

### It Starts with Students

"We have to make post-acute and long-term care a priority in nursing schools. Generally, students have one rotation where they learn about things like ADL care and bathing, but they don't see any of the nursing leadership or the extent of what nurses do in this setting," McDonald said.

To start, she suggested, "We have to speak with our state college representatives and partner with local colleges and universities. We need to invite them to partner with our facilities and provide opportunities for students to come to our setting to learn. We need to make geriatrics and long-term care a vibrant part of the curriculum."

### She suggested a few other keys to attracting nurses to this field and keeping them here:

- **Shadowing.** It is important to bring students in to shadow the DON, ADON, or even the clinical reimbursement specialist so they get a full, realistic look at what they do and the benefits of working in this setting (e.g., flexible hours, the ability to be part of a team, opportunities to really get to know residents and provide quality bedside care, etc.).
- **Mentorships.** It's not enough to bring nurses in and provide onboarding. New nurses should be connected with experienced, passionate mentors to get the best, most complete training, engage them with the organization's culture, and help them understand their role on the team and their significant contribution to quality care.
- **Career ladders.** We can't assume that, for example, all CNAs always want to be CNAs or that all of them want to become nurses. It is important to identify people's career goals and work with them to meet them, whether that means tuition assistance, certification programs, leadership training, or career coaching. "You need to have these programs internally and ask our team members about their goals and interests. We need to help support them on their journey," said McDonald.