

# Recruitment and Retention

## BEST PRACTICES FOR HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE PROVIDERS

In recent years, many hospice and palliative care providers have faced increasing challenges regarding recruitment and retention of qualified staff. Although workforce concerns have long existed in the hospice and palliative space, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the shortages that providers were already facing. Competition among healthcare providers, fewer applicants, retirement trends, clinicians leaving the bedside for remote work opportunities, and the pressures of matching skyrocketing salary and bonus expectations are only some of the challenges facing providers. The intent of this guide is to provide a set of best practice recommendations that hospice and palliative care providers can implement in order to combat ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.

## Recruitment

### ■ Sign-on bonuses

- Research local healthcare sign-on bonus trends and implement competitive bonus structures

### ■ Review agency benefits package

- Consider adding or improving benefits that could entice new applicants, such as:
  - Tuition reimbursement
  - Flexible or self-scheduling
  - Career ladders
  - Wellness incentives
- Reduce or eliminate waiting periods for implementation of benefits

### ■ Develop recruitment pipelines

- Cultivate relationships with local training programs and universities, such as schools of nursing and social work.
- Consider development of internal CNA training program. Refer to applicable state laws.
- Consider hiring unbudgeted clinicians to begin training so they can move into an open position when once becomes available.
- Remain in contact with staff who have resigned but are eligible for rehire.

### ■ Ensure that posted job descriptions are current

- If you've recently updated position descriptions, ensure that posted advertisements reflect current status.
- For example, include any recent updates regarding remote work options, flexible scheduling, etc.

### ■ Implement referral bonuses

- Reward current employees for referring qualified candidates

### ■ Immigration

- Explore employment opportunities for clinicians from outside of the U.S.

## Retention

### ■ Develop career ladders to promote staff from within

- Retaining qualified staff often means allowing them to move into different positions to support long-term career growth within your agency.
- Provide training and mentorship to new leaders and preceptors

## ■ Establish or improve tuition reimbursement programs

- ▶ Review current policies and explore developing or expanding options for staff to receive continuing education.
- ▶ If current policies are focused only on university degrees, consider expanding to include certifications, continuing education credits, etc.

## ■ Streamline workflows

- ▶ Ensure that all members of the IDG are working at the top of their scope of practice
- ▶ Conduct ride-along visits to identify pain points for clinicians. Assess carefully for:
  - Duplicate documentation issues
    - Would an EMR-pharmacy interface reduce the number of times the RN case manager has to document medication changes?
    - Are IDG members reporting into an after-hours/on-call system rather than on-call staff reading documentation already present in the EMR?
  - Administrative tasks that could be delegated to a non-clinical team member or volunteer
    - Scheduling visits
    - Creating and sending telehealth visit links to patients
    - DME delivery and pick-up orders
    - Enrollment/consent form completion
    - Contacting hospice attending providers/offices with routine patient updates
  - Unnecessary functions that are not tied to regulatory requirements
    - Consider whether all the tasks your clinicians are performing are tied to a regulatory requirement or best practice, or if they are a hold-over practice that could be streamlined or eliminated
    - Ask “why do we do it this way?” and eliminate any tasks or processes with no clear rationale
- ▶ Leverage technology to improve efficiency
  - Consider whether clinicians are using appropriate devices (laptop, tablet, phone, etc.) for the type of work they are completing
  - Invest in hardware and software solutions to support workflows (dual monitors, dictation platforms, etc.)
  - Assess internet connectivity in locations where staff are working. Provide technology to support reliable connections when indicated.

## ■ Assign caseloads appropriately

- ▶ Use acuity scales or predictive analytics to ensure that IDG members are carrying an appropriate caseload relative to both patient volume and patient acuity
- ▶ Refer to NHPCO staffing guidelines (is this current)?

## ■ Review scheduling practices

- ▶ Implement self-scheduling as a staff satisfier
- ▶ Determine if there are opportunities for alternate/flexible schedules
- ▶ Review remote work policies. Expand opportunities for remote work on a position-by-position basis.

## ■ Assess on-call/after-hours burden

- ▶ Explore available triage services to relieve on-call burden on internal staff
- ▶ Develop team of dedicated after-hours staff
- ▶ Develop Rapid Response team to address high acuity patients after hours

## ■ Consider utilization of travel nurses

- ▶ Ensure travel nurses are competent and trained to provide high-quality care
- ▶ Utilize “travel nurses” from within the agency
  - Are there opportunities to incentivize current employees to float to short-staffed locations within the agency's territory instead of turning to staffing agencies?

## ■ **Make efforts to improve workplace culture**

- Provide resources to maximize wellness and avoid burnout
- Implement staff satisfaction surveys, Listening Sessions, or Town Hall meetings to ensure that employee needs are being assessed and addressed
  - Ensure that a feedback loop is implemented so that staff feel confident that administration is reviewing and using feedback to make meaningful change

## Additional Resources

- Healthcare First. Dec 13, 2017. Six Ways to Improve Recruitment and Retention <https://www.healthcarefirst.com/recruitment-retention/>
- Kenyon Homecare Consulting – Recruitment and Retention Strategies page <https://www.kenyonhcc.com/newpage0a923704>
- Travel Nurse Transparency Study Act. June 6, 2022. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4352/text?r=19&s=1>
- Hospice News. July 29, 2021. Workplace Culture a Key Differentiator in Hospice Recruitment and Retention. <https://hospicenews.com/2021/07/29/workplace-culture-a-key-differentiator-in-hospice-recruitment-and-retention/>
- Hospice News. Mar 25, 2022. Silverstone Hospice Finds Winning Strategy in Recruitment and Retention. <https://hospicenews.com/2022/03/25/silverstone-hospice-finds-winning-strategy-in-recruitment-retention/>
- Hospice News. Aug 31, 2022. Hospices Use Education, Career Incentives to Grow Clinical Workforce. <https://hospicenews.com/2022/08/31/hospices-turn-inward-to-grow-clinical-workforce-with-education-career-incentives/>