

Maintaining a Healthy, Resilient Workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a supply and demand staffing problem, especially for nurses. Healthcare providers struggle to compete for travel nurses who have doubled or even tripled normal pay rates. Retaining staff should be a top focus during this unique time.



Improving Retention and Morale During COVID-19

Staff turnover and hiring can be expensive for healthcare providers in normal times. Staff retention strategies may need to be tailored to fit the unusual circumstances created by the pandemic. Here are few suggestions to help retain staff:

- Offer staff stipends for living support (i.e., ride-hailing transportation, meals to go, pay for increased broadband, lodging to avoid infecting family members, COVID-19 relief kits, etc.).
- Offer hazard pay, overtime or temporary salary increase during COVID-19 or other emergency events.
- Give extra pay and increased breaks to intensive care unit, emergency department and COVID-19 staff
- Offer supplemental contracts to pay for longer hours.
- Increase communication to frontline staff – staff want to be heard, have honest and transparent communication, clear policies, and trusted information about COVID-19.
- Seek input from frontline staff regularly and respond clearly about any actions or changes based on staff feedback. Completing surveys may be difficult in times of crisis, and leadership talking directly with staff both captures valuable information while communicating empathy and care.
- Build adequate breaks into workflow.
- Increase procedural teaching within the organization to assist with some clinical efforts.
- Pay for comprehensive training for nurses who are having to care for patients who are not within their specialty population.
- Offer an array of support for staff to access. This includes informal support, such as a “buddy system” or integrated clinician within the team whose role is more collegial. Communicate clearly about how to access more formal support, such as employee assistance programs (EAP) or wellness programs.
- Utilize certified, licensed, and unlicensed staff to the top of their training.
- Assess how to maximize partnerships between your organization and local allied health education programs to provide real-world learning while increasing care capacity to ease staff burden. Examples include vaccine and testing events.
- Allow frontline staff the opportunity to work at a vaccine event – hospitals have shared the protective effects for many health care staff who worked on COVID units.
- Increase hours for Per Diem staff.