

## Line in the Sand... No More Agency ALP for Janet Fulmer

This issue was brought to the forefront mostly because of a budgetary issue but also a morale issue with the current staff. From the financial side, our agency staff usage had slowly crept up to an alarming number within the first 3-4 months of the year. We had almost spent our annual budget by that time. Something had to change. From the staff morale side, the current staff were working very hard to cover for the agency's unfamiliarity with our residents and our procedures. They were frustrated and wanted things to change.

So, because of these issues, several key staff got together to work on a solution to this problem. During one of the site visits of our Leadership group, we visited a home who had eliminated agency from their facility. We spoke with administration as well as front line staff who made this change happen. It showed me that if they can do it, so can we. When I returned from this session I called a meeting of this core group of staff and shared what I heard. They were just as excited as I was and we were off to create our plan.

We recognized this was a big problem and we would need to address it from multiple angles.

Our approach:

1. Increase bonus \$'s for current staff picking up open shift
2. Develop PRN pool (at a higher wage)
3. Better interview process (have staff help with interviews)
4. Move quicker thru the hiring process (delays lost good candidates)
5. Better onboarding process and training

We began the process with the first 2 items on the list. We immediately increased the bonus amount to current staff to encourage them to pick up open shifts instead of using agency. Secondly, we began to develop a pool of PRN staff. We chose to pay them with a flat rate that was approximately 1.5 times the average wage for each nursing discipline. We knew it would take a few weeks to get the pool built up so during that time we began working on some of the other areas.

During the regular interview of an applicant, they would receive a tour of campus. We wanted the current staff to have more of a voice in the hiring process so we developed a tool for them to use while they were giving the tour of their area. We recognized that some staff have never interviewed before so we wanted to give them some suggested questions that they could use and also some guidance on questions they were not allowed to ask for legal purposes. They could note their responses on this form and it could be turned into the supervisor conducting the interview with their feedback. The current staff really liked having their opinions heard and felt like a valuable part of the hiring process.

Now to address the speed at which we were moving thru the hiring process. We recognized that some pieces were beyond our control (how fast references return calls) but others were within our control and those were the ones we focused on. We set up a spreadsheet and put it on a shared drive for the hiring team to see and track the steps thru the hiring process. This allowed us to see any areas we could improve on so we could move quickly on the best candidates that come to us.

Once the first 4 items were addressed and we had what we thought was an appropriate sized PRN pool, we drew the proverbial line in the sand and put a date on the calendar. June first was our target date for no more agency. I want to assure you that there were some tense shifts but our discipline has paid off and we are so glad we did it. The dollars we have invested in the increased wages and bonuses were significantly less than what we were paying for agency.

The last item on the list is still in progress with improving our new hire orientation process. Part of this is being helped with the new requirements associated with nursing competencies. We are redesigning our new hire process by adding the specific competencies required and also lengthening the number of days given to side-by-side shadowing with a training employee. Our plan is to double the number of days of orientation for new employees. The number of shifts of orientation would be determined on a case by case decision with factors involved being, amount of experience and position being key factors. The new employee with experience in their field will possibly not require as much shadowing as a brand new one might. Throughout the process, nursing leadership is checking in with the new employee to see how they are feeling about their orientation and if they are comfortable or still need some extra support in any areas.

This overall process is in the early stages but we are seeing some good results so far. I am certain that we will continue to revise and adjust our plan but we are hoping to see a significant decrease in our turnover by the end of the year.

# Walking Interview - Tour Conversation

Interview Candidate Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** Your goal is to get to know as much about this person in a short tour/conversation. You will want to put them at ease and be friendly so they will feel comfortable talking with you. Try to ask open ended questions that will give them an opportunity to share something about themselves and not answer with just a yes or no. Pay attention to how friendly they are. Count the number of times they smile by circling a smiling face below.



**As you are touring, notice how they react to residents in the area and other staff.**

\* Give them opportunity to greet residents and other staff.

**Tell me about your favorite job and what made it so memorable.**

**Tell me about the least favorite job you have ever had and why?**

**How do you prefer to receive praise / criticism?**

**What motivates you to give the very best care possible?**

**How do you handle it when a peer is not giving the best care possible?**

**Things you should not ask or say during an interview:**

1. Do you have children?  
\* Instead ask: Tell me about your family
2. Do not talk about being short staffed.  
\* There is obviously a staffing hole to fill or else they wouldn't be having an interview.
3. Do not spend the entire time talking.  
\* Let them talk, remember, you are getting to know them.
4. Do not share specific information about a resident you may encounter on your tour.  
\* Simply greet residents by their first name.
6. Do not be negative about your job.  
\* Answer their questions honestly but always try to speak of Asbury Park in a positive way.

Staff name \_\_\_\_\_