

Executive Summary of my Action Learning Process

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Project Description: Reducing nursing staff turnover at our long term care facility.

Developing Relationships: In order to facilitate the desired culture change, the way in which the nursing staff relates to one another and communicates became a primary focus of our process. Our strategy was to de-stratify the nursing structure. One way this was done was to include front-line staff in the interview process with prospective employees. Another key to building relationships is to generate more understanding of the various roles within the nursing department. To accomplish this, our orientation process was extended and nurses and CMAs were paired with CNAs, requiring them to perform the CNA's duties for several shifts. Following orientation, a 14 day and a 90 day interview is held with newly hired individuals to ask for their feedback regarding their onboarding experience.

We believe that these practices helped to close the perceived gap between Nurses, CMAs, and CNAs. By requiring exposure to all facets of resident care, all staff members have begun to appreciate their coworkers more and better understand the importance of teamwork and respectful communication.

Important Turning Points: I have learned that everyone communicates in a different way, and everyone responds to situations and stress in different ways. To expect advanced communication skills, prioritizing skills, delegation skills, and team-building skills from all employees is an unrealistic starting point. I have learned the importance of coaching all team members and have continued to work at finding ways to include all nursing staff in our training and onboarding efforts. By investing more time, energy and passion into relationship building, we have seen positive movement in our retention statistics. My major challenge is to keep all nursing staff invested in these cultural changes and to continue to keep our retention goals in front of the staff. People tend to revert to old habits which are not in concert with our cultural goals. I have also learned that there are times when, after much remedial effort has been spent, that some people simply are not a good fit for our organization and must be terminated. While these terminations hurt our retention numbers, the usual outcome is improved morale among those team members who have "bought in" to the new culture.

ALP and CFL contributions to growth as a leader: My participation in the Center for Leadership program has been beneficial in several ways. While I have considered myself to be a natural leader since adolescence, I now have a better understanding of my own biases, tendencies, and skill sets which all affect my actions, decisions and behaviors as a leader. One main area in which I have improved and grown is to address difficult and uncomfortable situations immediately and with confidence. I have learned that one can be compassionate AND firm AND fair in one's leadership. I must continually monitor myself to remain consistent and impartial while still treating people with respect, compassion and humility. Just as no two people react and respond the same way to the same stimuli, neither can I treat each person as if they were clones. Knowing, respecting and appreciating others is the key to building a culture of service where all members feel valued and act with compassion and integrity.