PACSTX
2025 Annual Conference:

Staff Retention:

The Impact of Teamwork and Harmony

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Defining the issue – why it's important

- It's impossible to provide quality services when staffing is a revolving door
- Always having new staff in the homes is dangerous – insufficient time to know clients' specific needs to prevent med errors, falls, behaviors, etc.
- Not enough $ to increase wages competitively, so…
- We must utilize every non-financial means possible to keep staff satisfied

The essential questions:

1. What aspects of the experience keep long-term staff on board?
2. How can we adapt our leadership to promote those factors for the sake of the people we serve and to preserve our own sanity?

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Defining the issue – why it's important

Breaking it down:

1. What parts of the experience of longer-term employees keep them on board?

2. How can we affect an entire organization to systematically adopt strategies that promote longevity without additional funds?

There is no single overriding solution, but the sum total of several strategies can help us through the next two years until the chance for a rate increase after the next legislative session in 2027.

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What's at stake when turnover is high?

- Client health and safety – minimizing critical incidents with staff who know special needs
- Perception of an organization that can't keep staff raises questions about the organization…parents, neighbors, regulatory, and potential new staff
  - Why do so many people leave so soon after starting?
  - The ownership and leaders must be difficult to work for
  - Owners don't care about its staff…they keep all the money for themselves
  - Leaders hide behind desks
  - Family members pull there loved ones out because they are so dissatisfied
  - The individuals must be too challenging…just not worth the pay
  - This company only hires the "bottom of the barrel" and I don't want to work with those people
- Inability to accomplish any regular work because all efforts are on hiring and pulling shifts
- Family members pull loved ones out, and then there's even less $ to pay staff

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What are the major challenges?

- Creating a program that attracts people who are less motivated by $ and more motivated by how they feel at work:
  - Where everyone feels appreciated…even for the smallest contributions
  - Where people feel competent and exceptional
  - Rewarding attendance throughout employment, and not just at the beginning
  - Pathways to better positions
  - Schedule flexibility
- Intrinsic rewards
- Meaningful work

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Cyclical problems

- Harmonious environment where staff have a good working relationships with each other, but overworked staff are irritable
- Supportive leadership with current employees takes time, but so much time spent hiring and training new staff
- Supervisory must be present (in the homes) to be supportive, but are frequently pulling shifts in other homes and can't get to the people who need support
- More time off improves morale, but it's hard to let people off when short-staffed
- Need to be fully staffed to give people time off, but people quit when they can't get time off
- Cycle of minimal staff training – lack of training leads to turn-over and turn over leads to need to get people started quicker before fully trained.

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What's the solution?

Creating a workplace full of factors that promote **intrinsic rewards.**

What are intrinsic rewards?

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Common intrinsic rewards

- **Accomplishment -** achievement, pride in completing tasks
- **Competence** - Developing new skills, increasing expertise, and gaining confidence in new abilities
- **Autonomy -** Having control over the work, being trusted to make your decisions, trusted to perform well and provide quality care
- **Sense of purpose -** The work is meaningful because of helping others
- **Personal growth -** Professional development opportunities, acquiring new skills
- **Enjoyment of the work -** Pleasure in performing the tasks of the job
- **Collaboration -** Sense of belonging and contributing to a successful team effort
- **Recognition** – Positive feedback and respect from co-workers and supervisors

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Reality check

This all sounds great, but it's a lot easier said than done!

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What's realistic?

What is within our control right now. What non-monetary changes can we make to attract and retain people who value:

- How they feel at work
- The rewarding nature of caregiving
- Their sense of a greater purpose that $

Although these issues don't matter as much as money to most people…there are still lots of people for whom these factors matter a lot. To find them and keep them, we can only alter some variables that **are** within our control.

WHAT ARE THESE VARAIBLES???

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Diversity, Inclusion, and Tolerance

- People who may otherwise feel uncomfortable in less tolerant environments crave a workplace where they can feel valued regardless of differences
- People who may not fit a traditional (or expected) persona may also feel unsafe from harassment, and highly value a safe environment over higher pay
- People who may not fit a traditional persona may value job security over money
- More people than we realize. More than gender, race, sexual/gender identity, etc. Lots of people feel unaccepted for reasons you will never know. And you don't need to know. You just need to ensure the environment is tolerant.
- Organizations that value performance over persona may achieve better outcomes, and all employees of those successful organizations benefit from the stability in an organization that's not always in trouble
- Leaders set the tone with their own behavior and their expectations of others…we accomplish more when we keep our biased opinions to ourselves…or get over them altogether. Great talent comes in all forms.

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Coaching, sensing, and active listening

- Refer to your employees as co-workers. Put egos aside.
- Working with co-workers toward improvement and growth. Coach toward overcoming performance obstacles to advancement in a non-threatening manner.
- Develop one-to-one communication with as many staff as possible. Make everyone feel important. Listen and accept what matters to others. Give some of your time to everyone and anyone at every level of management.
- Find out what is important to others and provide coaching and development to help them achieve their goals. That inspires loyalty, even more than money.
- "Manage by walking around" (Google it) Get out from behind your desk. Get to homes, Host sites, day programs. Learn what matters to others.

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Acknowledgement and praise

- The work we do is hard. Acknowledge it's difficulty. What we do requires a crazy commitment considering it's just a job. It's 24/7, and anyone who's really in it for the long haul is priceless and needs to be acknowledged as such.
- No one is great at everything. But we're all good at something. Point out to everyone you work with what you know they're good at and how the organization benefits from it. That's part of how people feel valued, and how you build a team.
- Most of us don't believe in rewards for showing up…but practically everyone in our field makes less money for harder work than in almost any other field. So yes, we can overtly appreciate that they show up! We can correct mistakes but still value the person.
- Praise the big accomplishments, of course. But also praise the small ones. Praise is free, and it means a lot to everyone at every level in the hierarchy. Our caregiving co-workers are trained to provide praise to our clients for the smallest things. Why is that so hard for us to do with them?
- Our professional co-workers are also making less money than their counterparts in other industries…so don't leave them out. They are making a sacrifice, too.

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Having fun at work without compromising professionalism

- Laugh out loud. It's infectious
- Share work stories that are funny without crossing professional lines
- Have lunch together in the conference room from time
- Organize more outings for individuals. Staff may dread the extra work but will brag about making it happen once they see the joy. Great outings become part of the lore of the organization. That's the highest level of what we do.
- Get homes to pair up for at-home meals. Staff who work alone with individuals need some time with co-workers. Otherwise, they will spend more time on the cell phone talking to people outside of work. It's just human nature.
- Solicit ideas from co-workers
- Add your own ideas to this slide…it barely scratches the surface

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Non-hostile environment

As hard as we commit to improving our efforts to retain people, let's not reverse all that effort by allowing any hostility. Here are some of the basics:

- Address misconduct in private…calmly!
- No yelling, no overt exp-expressions of anger. That's abusive and the employee will never forget it. That employe is now gone for the rest of their time with your group.
- Monitor your facial expressions and body language. Being unaware of yourself is unacceptable. No frowning, no yelling, No eye-rolling. Not ever!
- Correct performance issue in earnest. Fix the problem, save the staff…unless it's critical misconduct or repeated refusal to change.
- Resolve conflicts between workers immediately and together (not separately).
- Shield staff from hostile family members…they don't need that

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Non-hostile environment (continued)

- Adress performance issues earlier. If it's allowed for any time, it becomes much harder to address and gets worse to where you can't keep them.
- Don't gossip; intervene when you witness others gossiping. Make that intervention expected from everyone. Gossip is hostile to someone.
- Model professionalism. We all slip every now and then. But don't be oblivious of your own conduct…catch and control yourself.
- Praise professionalism in others…show others that you value it.
- Acknowledge staff when they have to deal with behavior – it's part of the job, but it also is a form of workplace hostility. We can't always fix it. But we sure can thank our staff who have to deal with it.

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Positivity

Our chosen career field is ridiculously challenging. Excessive regulation, no rate increases…it starts to feel totally unreasonable. But we continue to stay, it's a choice.

- We must be overtly positive so that we don't taint the workplace with any unnecessary negativity. Negativity is a huge repellant that will push good staff to look for work elsewhere
- Complaining is human nature in a stressful environment. But complaining also makes the environment more stressful for those around us.
- When leaders complain a lot, the rest of us start to feel like leadership is not in control to fix the issues they are complaining about. It conveys weakness.
- Our clients complain and their family members complain. That's enough for anyone trying to provide care. Instead of complaining, communicate what you expect in a non-threatening way. Explain your reasons. That's more respectful.

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Special recognition

On occasion, we can reward special "above-and-beyond" performance with small compensation (unscheduled):

- **Life-saving acts** - Examples: calling 911 when a unique health problem is detected and life threatening or directly saving a life with Heimlich or CPR.
- **Courageous acts** - Example: Intervening when a co-worker is acting poorly
- **Special acts of co-worker kindness** – Example: A staff cancels a vacation so a co-worker can take off for an important family matter.
- **Special acts of kindness toward clients** – Example: Taking a client with no involved family home for a holiday with the staff's family

Don't pick favorites – give everyone a chance. Shows how you value everyone

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Co-workers supporting each other

Examples:

- **Cover in each others shifts voluntarily** – When an emergent need to be off arises, a co-worker offers to cover (instead of a supervisor), the co-worker didn't have to
- **Transportation assistance** - Help a co-worker with an occasional car issue
- **Celebrate each other's life evets** – Birthdays, special joyous life circumstances (new grand baby), co-worker graduates from college.
- **Recognizing each other's support** – Speaking up in staff meetings (or other group setting) to say thank you for some type of support from another staff.
- **Jump in to help out** – Weekend staff is down to one individual for the next few days and takes the one remaining individual to another house to help a co-worker who has all individuals for the weekend.

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Questions and Comments?

Please feel free to share a story that illustrates harmony at your workplace!

Teach us what you're doing at your organization!

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Review

Thank you for participating!!

Please use QR code below to share you feedback on your phone:

SESSION SURVEY

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