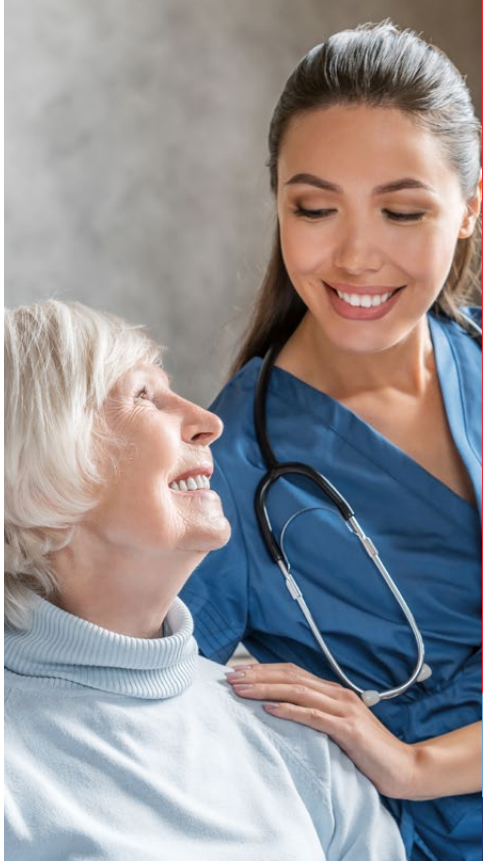




RETENTION TIPSHEET

Strategies and Tactics for Retaining Your
Best Clinicians and Caregivers



Home-based care providers find themselves in an increasing struggle for talented and passionate clinicians and caregivers. Recruitment efforts, including significant sign-on bonuses and proactive outreach to candidates, are currently the norm. While increasing clinical and caregiving capacity via recruitment are a prerequisite for agencies, current employees shouldn't be taken for granted.

The complicated process of training and onboarding an employee can take months under a best-case scenario. Ensuring you support your current workforce is an enormous investment in the stability and sustainability of your agency. By some estimates, losing a single RN can extract a five-figure cost on an organization.

To support our members, NAHC has compiled quantitative and qualitative research and surveys to capture best practices in some of the key areas that help retain the best home-based care clinicians and caregivers. We held in-depth focus groups with human resources leaders from a wide cross-section of our membership.

No two home-based care agencies are the same, and all will have different needs and tactics when retaining employees. These tips are meant to be broadly indicative of best practices and not a one-size-fits-all list of absolutes.

This work is part of a larger effort to invigorate the public perception of home-based care as a dynamic and cutting-edge environment. With your help, we are working to give care in the home the place it deserves in the value-based care environment of the future.



Best Practices for Retention of Home-Based Care Staff



These best practices tips – gathered from agencies providing home health, hospice, personal care, private duty nursing and palliative care, among others – can apply to any healthcare organization with a distributed workforce. NAHC's goal is to help all members and share some of the common themes that those interviewed stressed were working well to retain and support their field-based teams.

CRITICALLY EXAMINE YOUR ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

A new recruit's highest chance of leaving is during the first few days of orientation. Agencies reported the first year of employment is when they saw the most significant turnover. The handoff from the recruitment team to operations can be a breakage point for new staff. Ensuring your agency has a well-choreographed onboarding and training regimen should be a priority and goes beyond W-4 paperwork and background checks.

ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD HAVE RELIABLE PROCESSES IN PLACE FOR SUCH TASKS AS:

- Greeting new hires on their first day
- Ensuring any needed technology hardware is ready
- Setting up online accounts or software access
- Identifying key points of contact, like IT service desks and clinical preceptors
- Ensuring new hires have an easy-to-understand orientation schedule and where to go for help
- Regularly soliciting (and acting upon) critical feedback from new hires about their level of comfort and answering any questions they may have

These items will vary depending on the types of care an agency provides and roles they're trying to fill, but even small mistakes can shake a new hire's faith in your organization. That trust can be hard to rebuild.

According to a
2022 NAHC
nursing workforce survey,
half of those
surveyed
are considering
changing jobs
within the next year.

FOSTER DEEP CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FRONTLINE LEADERS AND FIELD STAFF

As the closest connection field staff has to your organization, a direct supervisor will often shape their perception of your company more than any other point of contact or communications. If that leader doesn't actively cultivate relationships, their staff may look elsewhere for support and connection.

Home-based care is rewarding, but it can be lonely and require independence. Frontline leaders need to be intentional in how they connect with and relate to their teams in the field. Returning calls, regularly scheduled check-ins and supervisor ride-alongs are all key tools in fostering deep connections to your agency.

Internal communications also plays a key role with a distributed workforce. While it's not the same as office "remote work," in many ways home-based care workers can be considered as telecommuters every day. Ensuring multiple deep and consistent touchpoints that work to foster a sense of connection and belonging are useful in keeping staff at your agency.

CONDUCT ANNUAL EMPLOYEE SURVEYS AND ACT ON FEEDBACK

Well-designed annual employee engagement surveys are one of the best ways to get a sense of how your staff feels. Tracking their satisfaction across key areas can feed strategic planning, help you know where to make future investments, and identify areas of opportunity for your leaders. A transparent survey process with guardrails for employee privacy to allow their candor can solicit feedback an agency can use in place of intuition when working to retain their best staff.

Acting on survey results is just as important for retention as the survey itself. If staff are regularly asked to participate in surveys but are never informed about the findings or any plans to improve their experiences, it can be more demotivating than if an agency never surveyed them at all. Having clear and honest communications about the results of an employee survey and how the organization is planning to act on that feedback are critical steps for an agency to take to increase retention.



WEAVE YOUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR OPERATIONS

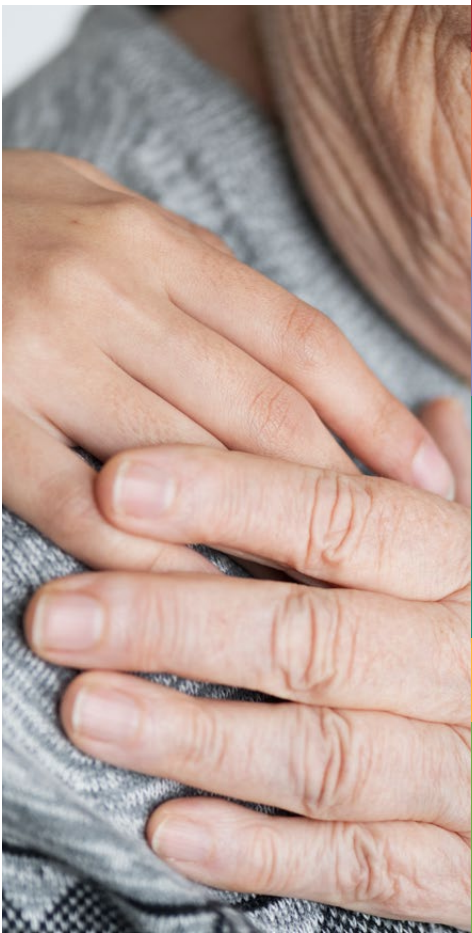
It's hard for many home-based care agencies to compete with health system or hospital compensation packages. However, for those who choose a career in home-based care, their "why" is critically important. Many who work as a clinician or caregiver in the home have moving stories of care they saw their loved ones receive.

NAHC's research and interviews showed that clinicians expect their organization to have a passion for the work (and patients) that matches their own. Having clearly articulated mission, vision and values as a part of everyday life within an organization is a powerful motivator. If the mission of an organization is only referenced in passing, staff won't feel as close a connection. Conversely, if shared company values are woven into the everyday lexicon of how staff communicates with each other, they will feel more connected to the purpose of the work they're doing in the home (and by proxy, the agency who supports them).

FIND CONSISTENT WAYS TO RECOGNIZE STAFF CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONSIDER STAY BONUSES

Recognition should be a year-round occurrence. Annual "clinician of the year" awards are only a part of how an organization should approach highlighting the work staff does in the homes of patients and clients. Agencies should find ways to continually highlight the ways staff has gone above and beyond, including via:

- **Employee newsletters**
- **Morning stand-up calls or video conferences**
- **Interdisciplinary group or case conference meetings**
- **Quarterly townhalls**
- **Internal or external social media channels**





The value of peer-to-peer recognition was stressed in NAHC's research. Finding ways for staff to honor, celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of their fellow teammates in the homes of patients and clients effectively deepens bonds and camaraderie amongst staff.

"Stay" bonuses or gifts of thanks can also be a useful tactic for agencies to consider. Staff often sees the advertisements their organizations use to recruit new employees and can note the significant sign-on bonuses being used, or hourly rates that are above what they may be paid. While it may not always be possible in a time of rate reductions and inflation, honoring the contributions of current staff and considering how the agency is investing in them can go a long way.

ENSURE STAFF UNDERSTANDS TOTAL COMPENSATION AND REWARDS

Agencies shouldn't assume that staff understands all of the benefits and supports they are being offered. Highlighting offerings outside of pay rates and health insurance are beneficial:

- Paid volunteer days
- Floating holidays
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Life insurance
- Mileage reimbursement
- Cost of living adjustments
- Foundations or employee support funds for disasters
- Tuition reimbursement

Regularly highlighting these offerings, as well as letting staff know that leadership is working hard on advocating to keep health insurance costs down and offer the most competitive package possible all were seen as ways to increase retention.



Direct Care Worker
turnover
in the first year is

64%

with much of it occurring in the

first
90
days
on the job

(Home Care Association
of America / NAHC
workforce report, 3/23)



BUILD AND HIGHLIGHT CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

For those employees who have a desire to either refine their clinical skillset or take on a larger challenge, organizations should have clearly defined and internally promoted programs to highlight their advancement opportunities.

Ongoing feedback should also be a part of everyday life at an agency. Offering regular in-person check-ins that can be used to track progress, discuss satisfaction and plan for growth development were all helpful tactics.

ENSURE STAFF CAN EASILY GET HELP AND THE ANSWERS THEY NEED IN THE FIELD

HR leaders stressed that investing in technologies and programs that allow home-based clinicians and caregivers to solve problems quickly was critical. Ensuring staff can get answers to IT challenges, policy/protocol matters, education on clinical care delivery nuance, or HR/benefits questions efficiently is a key differentiator. Giving field staff a sense of support and an extended team that has their back while they are in a patient or client home was a key reason cited in raising retention rates.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE HOME-BASED CARE COMMUNITY VIA EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Our interviews found that agencies heard from their members a desire for advocacy and advancement of the field. Offering time for staff to attend an advocacy day at the state or federal level was a differentiator. Similarly, allowing participation in state and national association committee work or professional networking was seen as a reason why staff chose to stay at their agency.

In a similar vein, developing residency programs and providing education to the next generation of clinicians or caregivers was suggested as both a retention and a recruitment tool. This builds the pipeline for future growth while allowing staff mentor opportunities.

“ In addition to conducting surveys at regular intervals, employers should make sure the design of the survey will yield information that isolates problems and helps management address them.”

(Society for Human Resource Management)



RETENTION FOR HOME CARE REQUIRES CONSTANT ATTENTION AS CONDITIONS CHANGE

NAHC is committed to raising the image of home-based care, including with clinicians and learners who want to continue a fulfilling career in the home. We are here to support our members and the larger care continuum with advocacy, training, best practices and support.

NAHC has also developed a similar tipsheet for best practices in recruitment of home-based care staff. **Please email marketing@nahc.org or [click here](#)** to view additional resources for our members.



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