

BLOG

5 Ways To Improve Home Health Nurse Retention

By Terrey L. Hatcher, on November 23, 2020

The U.S. population is aging—fast—with the number of individuals age 65 and over expected to reach **98 million by 2060**. Many elderly people today want to age from the comfort of their own homes, and that will require home care. While demand for home health nurses is increasing, employee turnover rates in the healthcare industry remain high.

Many Americans 65 and older plan to **stay at home** for as long as possible. Given that most of these Americans will, at some point, be unable to care for themselves without assistance, the need for home health nurses is expected to rise significantly in the years ahead.

In 2019, the national average **turnover rate** for all home health employees was 21.89%. With shortages across the industry, many home health agencies are scrambling to find and hire enough staff, providing home health nurses with the freedom to leave an unsatisfying job without fear of unemployment.

If home healthcare organizations want to compete in the current—and future—job market and boost retention, they must focus on improving job satisfaction for their home health nurses through comprehensive nursing retention programs.

Tips for Improving Home Health Nurse Retention

1. Improve Your Onboarding Process

Onboarding is one of the first and best opportunities to improve home health nurse retention. Instead of implementing lengthy, one-size-fits-all onboarding programs, organizations should strive to personalize the process as best as possible.

Employee assessments help administrators determine a new nurse's existing skill set as well as any areas of improvement. This information can then be leveraged to create **tailored learning plans** that fill knowledge gaps and help new home health nurses meet productivity standards and thrive in their position, all while avoiding repetitive, irrelevant information.



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Terrey Hatcher has more than two decades of expertise crafting content focused on professional development, marketing, tech, and education. At Relias, she collaborates with physicians, nurses, clinicians, and other experts to produce our award-winning content and communications.

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2. Applaud Your Employees

One of the easiest ways to confront retention challenges in home health nursing is through recognition. Applauding employees for their hard work and acknowledging their successes helps them feel more engaged and appreciated, increasing their investment in their organization.

In a time when few facilities have the resources to provide financial incentives, finding other ways to acknowledge employee contributions is important. Seemingly simple gestures, like thank-you cards, personal notes, or even shout-outs at team meetings, can all help nurses feel valued. According to research by Gallup, it doesn't matter what form the acknowledgment takes—what matters most is that it is **authentic, honest, and individualized**. Some of the most memorable forms of **recognition** include:

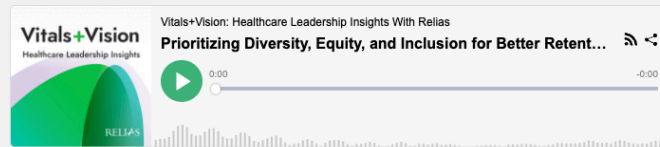
- Public recognition through an award or certificate.
- Private recognition from a boss or peer.
- Offering promotions or increasing responsibility to demonstrate trust.
- Commending a high level of achievement through formal reviews or evaluations.
- Celebrating significant employee anniversaries.

3. Create a Healthy Company Culture

LinkedIn research shows that **a sense of belonging and satisfaction** with a company's culture is one of the leading reasons an employee will remain in a position. Creating that culture can be challenging in home health nursing due to the distributed nature of the work, but for that reason it is all the more critical. By nurturing a positive company culture that ensures employees feel connected to their peers and superiors, regardless of their physical locations, you can establish a sense of pride and unity.

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Increasing **communication across teams** is one of the best ways to improve company culture. Communication helps build trust and respect among employees, allowing them to develop strong, collaborative relationships even if they are dispersed.

Administrators should consider creating group message chains that allow nurses to share success stories, ask questions, or brainstorm ideas. Adding fun elements to the chat, like trivia quizzes, ice breakers, funny videos of the week, and more can help keep employees engaged in the group. They will appreciate opportunities to infuse laughter into their days, which can be physically and emotionally draining.

4. Listen to and Empower Your Employees

All employees should be given the space to share their ideas and concerns. While managers are certainly knowledgeable and experienced, home health nurses are on the front lines of their profession. As a result, they can provide actionable, honest feedback to help improve the quality of care their organization provides.

Scheduling and client relations are two areas in particular where home health nurses can provide invaluable insights. Nurses understand better than office staff the needs of their clients as well as the routes they must take to get to them. If a nurse says that a certain schedule is unrealistic or that a specific client no longer seems to need home health care anymore, that feedback must be taken into consideration and adjustments made as necessary.

5. Offer Professional Development Opportunities

Research shows that a majority of employees value new or additional benefits over a pay raise, one of the most notable of which is the opportunity for professional development. Supporting professional development demonstrates that an organization is invested in the success and career development of its employees while also improving the quality of care it provides to patients.

Providing opportunities to partake in online learning modules and refresher courses, earn important nursing certifications, and attend workshops and conferences are just a few of the many ways administrators can support their employees' careers and empower them to grow within their organization.

Create an Action Plan for Home Health Nurse Retention

Retaining your home health nurses is more important than ever in today's market environment, but achieving that goal is often easier said than done. Home health administrators must zero in on the benefits that matter most to their employees. Seek input from your employees on what will keep them working with your organization. Then you find resources to help you improve in those areas.

Whether you are seeking to show appreciation and recognition, improve company culture, or enhance leadership skills, set a plan, find training resources to support your efforts, and follow through by communicating your efforts to your nursing staff. They need to hear your goals and see the results.

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- How to identify and remediate knowledge gaps and establish baseline competency metrics.
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