Caregiver Retention and Onboarding: The Missing Link

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Growing Concern over Caregiver Retention

The retention crisis in post-acute care continues. According to the 2023 HCP Benchmarking Report, home care had a 77% turnover rate in 2022. While we know this is high, it's shocking when compared to the average US turnover rate across all industries at 17%. So the obvious question is, why are agencies struggling so much with caregiver retention?

Not only are agencies having to compete with each other but also big box retailers, the food industry, etc., which are all fighting over the same hiring pool. When you look at the responsibilities of caregivers and compare them to other roles like cashiers or food servers, the amount of pressure in

caring for home care clients is considerably higher. For comparable pay and hours, a caregiver could leave caregiving and have an easier role in another industry. So how do agencies stop the bleeding?

Employees who have a good experience in their first 90 days of employment are 10 times more likely to stay. In other words, the quality of an organization's onboarding process can be a major factor in its turnover rate. With a better understanding of how onboarding looks in post-acute care, we would be able to determine if this was a major contributing factor to the caregiver crisis in the home care industry and hopefully receive some insight into how to solve it.

Why Conduct a Study?

As the leader in post-acute care human capital management (HCM), we suspected there was a difference in onboarding perception between caregivers and administrators during one of the most fragile times in a caregiver's employment – onboarding. While there are a plethora of studies showing the importance of having high-quality onboarding, there was nothing digging deep into if and why the post-acute care industry was falling behind.

In order to uncover what both caregivers and admins think about the onboarding standards in post-acute care today, we conducted a comprehensive survey. This would provide us with insights into the current state and what we can do to enhance both the administrator and caregiver experience, elevating the industry as a whole.

About the Study

We surveyed 175 administrators and 220 caregivers working in the post-acute care industry across the United States, including both home-based and facility/community-based care to dive deeper into why so many organizations were struggling to retain staff. Our comprehensive report provides unique insight into how caregivers and admins feel about various topics pertaining to onboarding, training, payroll, and more. All the results and important takeaways can be found here.

Don't Be Fooled: Good Isn't Good

When talking to caregivers, 63% of caregivers described their onboarding as "good" or "excellent," but after digging deeper, we discovered that what was considered a positive onboarding experience was shockingly low. Only 41% of surveyed caregivers said they even received a warm welcome during the onboarding process. Let that sink in for a moment. Caregiving is a difficult role, and agencies are struggling to find people who can fill their hiring needs and retain them for an extended period, yet those who are hired on aren't even being welcomed to their new agency on the first day. Some other notable findings were that only 40% believed they received clear and transparent communication, 38% believed their questions were answered promptly and helpfully, and 29% said that they felt as though the onboarding process was structured and well organized.

Numbers like this show how, despite caregivers reporting that their onboarding was acceptable, the standards of what is acceptable are incredibly low in this industry. While it may initially seem as though that's fine (after all, caregivers aren't demanding better onboarding processes), we can look at industry retention rates, the effect onboarding has on retention, and the onboarding standards and conclude that a re-think is long overdue. The bar is low, and the current standard is hurting both agencies and caregivers (retention numbers tell the story).

Onboarding for Retention: Leaders vs. Laggards

To confirm our theory that onboarding was affecting retention, we continued to dive deeper into how caregivers' perception of their onboarding experience would affect their employee-employer relationship long term. We found that the perception of the quality of onboarding has a major impact on how caregivers perceive their employer throughout the duration of their employment. Agencies whose caregivers believed they had a good or excellent experience were categorized as Onboarding Leaders while everyone else were categorized as Onboarding Laggards. When the data was compared between the two groups, caregivers at Onboarding Leaders had a significantly higher rate of feeling "secure" or "very secure" in their employment. Of caregivers at Onboarding Leaders, 83% felt "secure" in their employment compared to only 44% in Onboarding Laggards. This didn't stop there, bleeding into their social lives as well. Of caregivers at Onboarding Leaders, 90% believed that they had a good work-life balance compared to only 34% at Onboarding Laggards.

With this information, it was no surprise that at Onboarding Leaders, only 29% of employees were actively or passively searching to change employers, considerably less than the 46% at Onboarding Laggards. Onboarding makes a difference. With a good onboarding process, you tell your caregivers right from their first interaction with you that your agency is established and invested in its workforce.

Imagine walking in for your first day on the job, and nobody there seems to know what to do with you. You fill out a few standard papers with an HR rep, but for the most part, it feels unorganized. Now compare that to walking in on the first day, and your new employer walks you through an established, digital process, where everything you need to complete is cleanly presented to you and expectations on your role, who your manager will be, and who you can speak with about questions is communicated to you. The difference is night and day.

The Insights Continue: Control the Controllables

When it comes to making an impact on your agency, it's not just about what we found but what you can do about it.

If you want to read more on how you can make an impact on your organization's retention issues and gain greater insights into post-acute care onboarding, click here to get our full 2024 Caregiver Onboarding Experience Report.

Forever in it with you, Viventium.

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