

ABSTRACT

Purpose Statement: The changing needs of health care for the elderly requires a workforce that can address health care needs in multiple settings. The aim of this study is to describe current recruitment and retention issues experienced by long-term care (LTC) facilities in New York City (NYC).

Methods: Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this research. Working with statewide LTC provider associations, a survey was developed on current recruitment and retention issues, including identifying factors contributing to those issues. Researchers also conducted key informant interviews using a convenience sample of LTC facility human resource directors in the greater NYC area.

Key Findings: Nearly 97% of LTC facilities reported Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) being the most difficult to recruit, followed by Registered Nurses (RNs). The shortage of applicants was the major reason for these difficulties along with COVID-19 vaccine or booster refusal. The most difficult to retain included newly trained RNs, Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), and LPNs. Staff leaving for higher pay was a common reason cited for departures.

Conclusions: Traditional recruitment strategies are less effective than they once were. More creative strategies are needed for recruiting and retaining workers.

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INTRODUCTION

- More housing options for the elderly—including senior apartments and assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and individuals aging in their own homes—requires a workforce that can address health care needs in multiple settings
- An experienced long-term care (LTC) workforce is needed to address the specific needs of elderly nursing homes residents, who have more health care conditions requiring more care
- This research describes current recruitment and retention issues experienced by LTC facilities in New York City (NYC) in order to support planning for a sufficient future LTC workforce

METHODS

- Research included both quantitative and qualitative methods
- Surveys were developed to determine current recruitment and retention issues
 - Respondents were asked to:
 - Identify difficulty recruiting and retaining staff for selected health care occupations
 - Identify reasons for the difficulties in each occupation
 - Indicate if they planned to expand or reduce staffing in various categories of occupations
- Key informant interviews were conducted using a convenience sample of nursing home human resource directors in the greater NYC area (in 6 organizations)
 - To the extent possible, size, sponsorship, and location were considered to ensure broad representation
 - Key informants were asked about:
 - Top 5 occupations most difficult to recruit
 - Top 5 occupations most difficult to retain
 - Common reasons for recruitment and retention difficulties
 - Strategies or incentives to address these staffing difficulties
 - Issues with transition from education to practice
 - Strategies for building the health care workforce pipeline

RESULTS

- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), newly-trained Registered Nurses (RNs), and experienced RNs were the most difficult to recruit at LTC facilities

Table 1. Most Difficult to Recruit for Selected Occupations in NYC LTC Facilities

Occupation	Degree of Recruitment Difficulty
LPNs	4.63
Newly Trained RNs	4.50
Experienced RNs	4.49
Nurse Directors/Managers	4.35
Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)	4.27
Temporary CNAs	4.17
Minimum Data Set (MDS) Coordinators	4.10
Feeding Assistants	4.00
Home Health Aides (HHAs)	3.89
Respiratory Therapists	3.86

- Main reasons cited for recruitment difficulties included a shortage of workers, no competitive salaries, and refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccine or booster

Table 2. Most Difficult to Retain for Selected Occupations in NYC LTC Facilities

Occupation	Degree of Recruitment Difficulty
Newly Trained RNs	3.91
LPNs	3.76
CNAs	3.70
Experienced RNs	3.63
Temporary CNAs	3.55
Nurse Directors/Managers	3.32
Personal Care Aides (PCAs)	3.25
Respiratory Therapists	3.22
Licensed Clinical Social Workers	3.16
HHAs	3.15

- Main reasons cited for retention difficulties included leaving for better pay and benefits, leaving for jobs in other employment sectors, fear of COVID-19 exposure, and/or COVID-19 vaccine or booster requirements
- Nearly 50% of respondents indicated expanding the number of RNs and LPNs positions in 2022
- Slightly over 40% reported the desire to expand the number of paraprofessionals in 2022

RESULTS (cont.)

- There are generational differences in recruitment and retention
 - Increased difficulty engaging younger workers
 - Younger RNs and LPNs less willing to work in LTC
 - Younger workers stay employed with one provider for much shorter periods of time
- Internal and external strategies to recruit and retain workers:
 - Internal referral programs
 - Bonuses tied to upgrading and training
 - Increased linkages to high schools and colleges

DISCUSSION

- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing workforce shortages and contributed to more attrition from the workforce
- Many workers experienced stressful working conditions (extremely ill patients and staffing shortages) and left their jobs, including many older workers who retired
- Some workers left their jobs due to concerns about COVID-19 exposure and the potential impact on them and their families
- Other factors that contributed to increased attrition included family commitments (ie, childcare, eldercare) and transportation issues

CONCLUSIONS

- Traditional recruitment strategies such as sign-on bonuses, benefits, and union memberships are less effective than they once were
- More creative strategies are needed for recruiting and retaining workers
- Younger workers are concerned with work-life balance, which can be addressed through flexible work hours or hybrid models of work
- Programs to address pipeline issues and career ladders are needed to bring new people into health care careers and create diversity
- High school students need to be introduced to health care careers through internships, work shadowing, or other experiences