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Staffing For Success: How We Make It Happen

With more than 1,800 employees in 18 post-acute care centers in Ohio and Michigan, executives at Altercare of Ohio know a thing or two about staffing and labor management. For Altercare, staffing and labor management are intertwined with the company's strategic goals to improve quality, customer service and employee satisfaction.

Getting staffing right is critical for the company, especially with cost pressures and the growth of managed care business in post-acute care. Dan Leamon, Vice President at Altercare, acknowledges the difficulties in dealing with these issues. "Our margins are being squeezed. We are facing challenges related to length of stay while more of our business is coming from managed care organizations. We continue to be challenged with the managed care rates as well as reimbursement reductions."

"All of this is going on, so we have to improve our cost management," Leamon added.

Controlling Labor Costs

Because payroll expenses at Altercare represent more than 50% of the company's costs, executives made the decision to increase their focus on staffing and labor management. That's when they turned to OnShift, which provides staff scheduling and labor management software for long-term care and senior living.

Most of the facilities at Alter-



Altercare employees are all smiles thanks to OnShift's mobile app.

care were scheduling employees on paper or with a spreadsheet. "There was a main bulletin board with postings. Everyone would stand in front, trying to jot down days to work. They were frustrated, especially when they needed to make a change after the schedule was posted," said Diane Geis, Executive Vice President of Human Resources at Altercare.

With OnShift, schedules are created and managed online. "It's much faster and simpler with OnShift," said Geis. Employees can access their schedules from any computer or right from their smartphones with OnShift's mobile app. "We wanted employees to have their schedules at their fingertips and know in advance

what their schedule is. If they have availability they can easily select additional shifts if they want to pick them up. That's a great thing for employee satisfaction."

Overtime was a major issue with Altercare's manual scheduling processes. Leamon shared an example from Altercare of Hartsville. "They were at 6.6% overtime prior to OnShift. Within six weeks of using OnShift, we were down to just 1% overtime. We are saving significantly."

OnShift projects which employees will go into overtime and when, so managers have an opportunity to make changes before the overtime hours and costs are incurred. "In the old days, we would not know the accurate

results of payroll until we actually ran the pay and people got paid. We were almost three weeks behind," said Leamon. "With OnShift, being able to see those employees going into overtime in the future lets our supervisors make changes so they can select the best candidates and avoid unnecessary costs," added Geis. To date, Altercare facilities have reduced their overtime to a facility-wide average of just 1.6%.

Employees punching in early and out late had also increased costs. "We knew it was there but we just couldn't measure it or address it," said Geis. "OnShift has helped us see when staff are getting extra hours before or after the shift. Now we can adjust staff-

ing and it helps with managing our costs and all of our analysis.”

Resolving Employee Call-Offs

With OnShift, community supervisors have tools to manage staff and attendance. “We experience more than an acceptable amount of call-offs at times. It is time-consuming trying to find replacements. OnShift helps us have better tracking of those call-offs in order to apply our policy compliance more fairly and consistently. With OnShift’s mass text and call message send-out feature we can fill those shift vacancies much easier,” said Geis.

Employee overtime due to call-offs has decreased with OnShift. Altercare employees like the ability to select how they want to be communicated with via OnShift — text, email, automated phone call, or mobile push notification. In addition, managers now have more visibility into employee attendance. “We’re finding that the call-offs are not buried. They are much more public and we can see who’s calling off, when, and how they’re trending. They are much more visible to managers of a facility,” noted Leamon.

Adjusting Staff to Census

Fluctuations in census are a daily thing at Altercare communities. In 2013, Altercare had 4,585 admissions across communities. With such a high volume, staffing properly for both costs and quality care requires planning along with day-to-day attention.

Prior to OnShift, HR managers at the communities matched hours per patient day (HPPD) with census in the past. “In our world, we have to match payroll with census. With OnShift, they adjust staffing for the second shift based on what happened in the first shift. This has made a big impact on our budgeting

and better compliance with our budget. Adjusting staffing to correct census levels has improved our efficiency, managed costs and still allows us to provide quality care to our customers,” said Geis.

At Altercare of Nobles in October, the census in the rehabilitation facility dropped by 10. “What we did there was manage our variance to budget with OnShift,” said Leamon. The facility was projected to be 133 hours over in pay. OnShift surfaced the overage from its staffing level calculations that consider census and nursing hours compared to schedules and labor budgets. “When

ulers in advance when part-time workers exceed their hours’ thresholds, so assignments can be adjusted. “We think OnShift is a great tool to have for health-care reform. If we didn’t have this, it would be difficult,” said Geis. “With OnShift, an HR manager can get immediate recognition of who might need a status change, see it before the audit, and be proactive with the change.”

Satisfaction and Success

One of the keys to success at Altercare is adoption. Like with any new product, “you don’t buy it, turn it on, and hope it works,” said

The average Altercare community has nearly 400 logins per week. “This tells us about adaptability. OnShift can be accessed at home, from computers in the break room, and from smart phones,” Leamon noted.

The mobile app from OnShift has been a big hit with employees. With just a few taps, they can manage their schedule, pick up and request shifts, and request time off. “The staff was so excited when OnShift’s mobile app was released. We have heard great feedback. Most of our employees have smartphones. It’s become a way of life. They want an app for everything!” said Geis.

And with happy staff, Altercare communities, residents, and families all benefit. Geis is all for it. “When you have employee satisfaction they will enjoy what they are doing. They are more passionate about their jobs. They want to be there and provide the best quality care that they can. That’s better customer satisfaction. With OnShift employees are more satisfied and we have more efficient and cost-effective labor management. It becomes a complete cycle.” ■

“It’s much faster and simpler with OnShift.”

Diane Geis, Altercare’s Executive Vice President of Human Resources

we saw census going down, we reacted quickly and were able to avoid extra hours that weren’t required.” Altercare effectively reduced costs while still providing the right staff to deliver high quality resident and patient care.

Altercare addresses staffing and labor management with OnShift across all employees in all departments — dietary, housekeeping, laundry, administration — not just those in nursing. “OnShift is not just for HR. It’s a facility system. OnShift has empowered all of our department leaders to take control of their employee management. After all, you can’t manage a facility to budget as a whole without all departments.”

This is also helping Altercare prepare for the Affordable Care Act and the need to manage part-time workers to their part-time hours in light of the employer mandate. OnShift alerts sched-

Leamon. A successful implementation requires people, processes and best practices. A Customer Success Manager from OnShift continues to work with Altercare communities after training. “The ongoing support and weekly phone calls are a very effective approach to make sure it’s implemented,” added Leamon.

Management involvement has facilitated success, along with a best practice that Altercare developed internally. “Chuck at Altercare of Mentor took OnShift and ran with it. His facility is over 200 employees and he made it easy for his employees to embrace,” said Leamon. Altercare of Mentor was one of the first facilities to use OnShift, and Chuck serves as an OnShift expert for the rest of Altercare facilities. He even spent time in other communities during their on-boarding periods. All of this has advanced adoption across communities.

Altercare of Ohio

1,800 employees in Rehabilitation Centers Division

5,974 patients & residents in 2013

18 facilities in Ohio & Michigan
- Post-acute medical care
- Rehabilitation
- Assisted living
- Alzheimer’s/dementia care