44 WAYS TO REDUCE UNPLANNED CAREGIVER ABSENCES

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WHY ARE YOUR CAREGIVERS ABSENT?

- 3% (average absenteeism rate across all industries)
- 10% (average absenteeism rate in direct care workers)

TOP 10 REASONS:

1. Physical Illness (cold, flu, etc.)
2. Mental Illness (depression, anxiety)
3. Child or Elder Care Issues
4. Transportation Problems
5. Pain (usually work related)
6. Low Workplace Morale
7. Lack of engagement in company
8. Burnout
9. Lack of support from supervisor
10. Stress (personal or work related)

Keep reading to find solutions to each of these problems!
1. Handwashing

Studies show most healthcare workers fail to wash their hands as often as - or as well as - they should. Have new Caregivers demonstrate proper handwashing technique during orientation. Hold a skills fair to teach old and new caregivers proper handwashing technique. Send random, friendly text reminders to caregivers to wash their hands!

2. Cough Etiquette

Run a “Cover Your Cough” Campaign just before cold and flu season. Get flyers, posters and other materials from the CDC at [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm). Remind Caregivers to cough and sneeze into their elbow -- not into their hands. Encourage them to teach clients and family members this technique as well.

3. Infection Control Update

Require all Caregivers to complete continuing education on Infection Control once a year. This may already be a requirement in your state. If not, make it a company policy!

4. Encourage Smokers to Quit

Cigarette smoke contains chemicals that weaken the immune system. This means people who smoke are more likely to get sick. Avoid hiring smokers, if you can. Encourage Caregivers who smoke to quit. Learn how to quit, or help someone else quit at: [https://smokefree.gov/](https://smokefree.gov/).

5. Flu Vaccine Clinic

Offer onsite seasonal flu vaccinations to Caregivers at no or low cost. Contact local pharmacies or other commercial community vaccinators to organize your on-site flu clinic.

6. Make sure PPE is available

Make sure your Caregivers always have access to gloves (or any other PPE) whenever they may need it. For Home Care workers, hand out gloves to Caregivers when they turn in their time sheets every week. In facilities, make sure gloves are available in hallways and resident rooms.
Reduce Absenteeism from:
MENTAL ILLNESS
(DEPRESSION, ANXIETY)

7. Listen

Provide a supportive environment where people feel safe talking about their feelings. Never judge. Ask what support they need and be open to providing it.

8. Be Flexible

If a certain client is triggering sadness or depressed feelings for a Caregiver, be open to changing the Caregiver’s assignment.

9. Know the Signs

Chances are your depressed Caregivers will NOT come out and tell you how they are feeling. It’s up to you to recognize the signs and refer employees appropriately. What are the signs a Caregiver may be depressed?

- Changes in work performance.
- Frequent tardiness or absences.
- Forgetfulness or error-prone.
- Talks about being tired all the time.
- Unexplained aches and pains.

10. Create a “Support Group”

Caregivers may become depressed after losing a client, or simply by witnessing the slow decline of their client’s health. Consider holding short “support group” meetings on a regular basis for those staff members who would like to discuss their feelings about these issues.
11. Partner with Local Daycares

Many childcare operators now offer corporate partnerships with the employers in their area. Employer-sponsored programs offer a variety of child care options such as: tuition subsidies, preferred pricing and back-up childcare.

12. Care.com’s Care@Work Program

Partner with care.com to give employees access to screened, professional babysitters and nannies on a moment’s notice. From the Care.com site: “Add Care@Work to your benefits program to help employees handle the important things at home, so they can do awesome things at work.”

13. Offer Flexible Spending Accounts

FSAs allow employees to set aside pre-tax dollars to pay for healthcare expenses and work-related day care expenses. Day care expenses may include before-and after-school care programs, preschool and summer day camp. FSAs can help families save up to $2,000 per year on child care expenses.

14. On-site Childcare

While onsite child care centers aren’t an option for all companies – it may be worth exploring if you have more than ten employees who would be willing to use it.
15. Encourage Ride-Sharing

Match up Caregivers who live near each other and encourage Ride Sharing. Designate a staff member to be in charge of matching riders or use rideshare matching software to match potential ride-sharers.

16. Vouchers and Bus Passes

Subsidize employees’ “Qualified Transportation” by offering vouchers and bus passes. The IRS allows an employer to pay for employees’ “qualified transit” costs, up to $255 / month per employee. Qualified transit includes vanpooling, bus, rail, and ferry services.

17. Vanpooling

Look into joining a Vanpool for your Caregivers. If you are a small company, you may be able to team up with other local businesses to reduce the cost.

18. “Uber for Business”

Uber for Business provides businesses with affordable rides for employees, with a central dashboard that keeps track of Uber trips and fares. Click HERE for more info!

19. Join Forces

Partner with other local employers to form a transportation consortium and jointly support shared ride selections or access discounted transit passes for employees.
20. Provide Ongoing Training

Provide training at orientation and ongoing continuing education on safe transfers, home care safety, taking care of your back and dealing with chronic pain.

21. Initiate Wellness Program

Individuals who are not in good physical condition tend to have more injuries. A workplace wellness program can address issues with physical fitness, weight, diet, exercise, personal habits that contribute to musculoskeletal pain and back injuries.

22. Invest in Alternatives

A group of CNAs in Arizona asked their employer to help pay for group Pilates and yoga classes for the staff so that they could strengthen their backs to avoid injuries.

23. Free Diet/Fitness Challenges

Start a fitness or weight loss challenge with your team. Working together as a group is inspiring, empowering, and promotes accountability! If your Caregivers have FitBits, you can run a challenge from the free FitBit app. Or, start a weight loss challenge and offer praise and prizes for meeting benchmarks (such as 5 / 10 /15 pounds lost) along the way.

46%

(percentage of lost work days due to back pain or back injuries in direct care workers)
Reduce Absenteeism from:

**LACK OF SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISOR**

24. **Stay Connected**

Connect often with your Caregivers. Call, text or email just to “see how things are going.” Connect more often with new employees, but don’t neglect your more experienced team members. They need support too!

25. **Hold Regular Team Meetings**

Hold regular Team Meetings where you go over any new policies, introduce new team members and give your team an opportunity to voice their thoughts and concerns and to brainstorm solutions to any problems.

26. **Conduct Reviews in Person**

Employee reviews are a great time to sit down, one-on-one with your team members. Be sure to praise accomplishments and collaborate on solutions for areas that may need improvement.

27. **“Walk the Walk”**

Part of being a supportive leader is gaining the trust and respect of your team. The best way to do this is to lead by example. When your actions match what you say, people are more likely to follow your lead!

28. **Recognize Accomplishments**

Celebrate wins (such as meeting a client quota or going 100 days with no falls). A simple “thank you” is always good. Or, have a pizza party to recognize their efforts and show your appreciation.
29. Take time to Train

Investing in e-learning, continuing education, training, seminars, and live classes lets your Caregivers know they are a vital part of the healthcare team.

30. Company Merch / SWAG

Everyone loves t-shirts, coffee mugs, tote bags and water bottles! Offering your Caregivers free company apparel and other logo merchandise can be a simple, inexpensive way to say, “We like having you on our team!”

31. Team service projects

Boost employee engagement in your company culture by participating in a Walk/Run for charity or a community service project. Getting together outside of work hours in pursuit of a common goal to help others is great way to bring teams closer together.

32. Uniforms

Consider having a company wide uniform. It may be a certain color that Caregivers purchase on their own, or invest in scrub tops with your logo on them. Caregivers who wear standardized uniforms report feeling more professional, put-together and unified. Uniforms give employees a sense of solidarity with co-workers, which improves teamwork and job performance.

Reduce Absenteeism from:

LACK OF ENGAGEMENT IN COMPANY

22 million

(number of actively disengaged employees costing the American economy as much as $350 billion dollars per year in absenteeism and lost productivity)
33. Add a Mentorship Program

A peer-to-peer mentoring program can benefit everyone involved, including both the mentor and mentee. It can improve morale, reduce absenteeism and ensure the highest quality of care for the clients you serve.

34. Share Praise from Clients

Send requests to your clients to recognize Caregivers who have given them great care. Share the praise you receive with your whole team.

35. Recognition in Front of Peers

Giving recognition in private is nice, but praising Caregivers for outstanding service in front of their peers provides a giant boost in morale.

36. Hand-Written Notes

Personal, heartfelt, hand-written thank you notes let your Caregivers know they are worth your time and attention.

37. Give Unexpected Gifts

A 2013 Harvard Business School study found that giving unexpected financial gifts to employees leads to higher productivity. The research found that, "Gifts are roughly as efficient as hiring more workers." Imagine the positive impact of giving a grocery store gift card to a single mother or a pre-paid gas card to young student working her way through school.
38. Educate Employees on Burnout

Consider asking a mental health professional to provide information about burnout and how employees can prevent it. Hold a seminar where employees can ask relevant questions about burnout.

39. Provide Resilience Training

Psychological resilience has been associated with a lower prevalence of burnout for healthcare workers. Google the term “resilience training for healthcare” to find a program that is right for your team.

40. Scheduling Solutions

Try to keep consistent assignments. Many Caregivers are single parents of young children who find it difficult to manage unexpected changes in their schedules. If possible, offer staff control over scheduling to decrease burnout.

41. Career Advancement

Offer career advancement opportunities such as providing reimbursement for non-medical caregivers to get CNA certification. This will give your staff the satisfaction of remaining with your organization while increasing their skills and salary.
Reduce Absenteeism from: STRESS

42. Stress Reduction Classes
Offer live classes and/or e-learning about stress reduction and the importance of self-care.

43. Yearly Wellness Fair
Sponsor a wellness fair to coincide with annual benefits enrollment. Invite professionals from your community to give out information to your team on stress reduction, self-care, relaxation techniques, nutrition, sleep and physical activity.

44. Look at What Some Hospitals Did
- A hospital in Georgetown invested in an arts and humanities program to offer employees activities such as dance, pottery, painting and journal writing. Creative expression gives staff the opportunity to get re-energized.
- Another hospital gave its employees knitting instruction through a non-profit group called Project Knitwell, which has a mission to bring the therapeutic benefits of knitting to those in stressful situations. The activity worked as both a stress-reliever and a team-building exercise, getting staff members to work together and learn the new skill.
- A facility in Baltimore gave some stressed out employees a meditation program designed to teach them techniques to stay calm and collected on busy days. The session went so well that the facility is planning to expand the services to more staff in the future.
HOW WILL YOU DECREASE ABSENTEEISM?

What ideas will you try from this list? Write them here, then check back in six months and see if they worked! Reach out to us on social media to let us know what’s working in your organization!

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