



The Right Stuff

The IHS Office of Public Health Support (OPHS) presents the first in a series of Retention Briefs designed to help address the challenge of retaining professional and clinical staff within an Indian health facility. In this issue, learn how to make a difference with employees through open communication and encouragement while promoting retention and goodwill among the staff. Retention strategies include **best practices of leadership, recruiting, professional development and communication**. We encourage you to review these cases and to discuss with the leadership team (administration, clinical directors, other leaders, etc.) how you can implement these practices when faced with similar challenges.

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Best Practices

LEADERSHIP

Increase Your Exposure — An effective leader is one who leads by example and isn't afraid to get his or her hands dirty. A leader with a clear purpose and mission that he or she articulates to the team and, by the same token, who regularly solicits their input, is a "servant" leader who is able to build a better relationship with the team. As a facilitator, you ensure your staff is well equipped with the right materials, resources, services and guidance to allow them to successfully accomplish their mission and stay motivated to your mission. It's a simple act that says that top management's priority is the welfare of the staff and to ensure that they know you support them. The staff will also feel more valued because they will have the opportunity to contribute at a higher level.

COMMUNICATION

Be Accessible — Don't wait for a staff member to come to you with a problem. Be a proactive problem-solver. When you make yourself available to talk about issues, you'll be better able to deal with them before they become a larger problem that's more difficult to manage. In fact, your accessibility can improve the perception of your support. When you make a point of putting yourself into the clinical setting where frontline employees can build a relationship with you, they will have more confidence in you because your presence shows that you care and are willing to help them if they need it.

RECRUITMENT

Build Your Team in Blocks — Sometimes whom you know can make a real difference. Apply that same strategy to building your team. Ask your professionals if they know anyone who would be a good fit for your facility or hire a group of three or four people from the same school. You'll find that new employees coming in as a group will arrive with a built-in social network. Although it does cost more initially, you will be forming a stable nucleus for the department.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Better Practices Result in Better Patient Care — A well-trained staff not only serves as the heart of your organization. It also allows for excellent customer service and positive interaction with patients. Better patient care will then reciprocate this positive attitude by encouraging patients to return for more services. Provide staff members with the level of training they need in order to provide the kind of professional care your community deserves. Show that you value their skills by investing in them and allowing them to enhance their ability to perform on the job. Remember, the more your employees learn, the better they'll perform for those you serve.