



In This Issue:
Communication is Key
Make it a Priority to Stay Informed
Encourage Frank Discussions with Staff
Hold Regular Staff Meetings
Publicly Reward Performance
Use Exit Interviews

Fostering Communication — A good leader recognizes that fostering communication and goodwill among team members are two guiding forces that ensure a strong and productive health care practice.

Communication is Key

Encouraging open communication, supportive reinforcement and constructive feedback raises morale and offers staff members a sense of accomplishment, appreciation and accountability, as well as promotes retention.

Two-way communication between Indian health facility management and clinicians fosters an exchange of ideas that helps produce well-thought-out decisions and procedures. It provides an opportunity to identify and address problems as they arise while channeling conflict and dissatisfaction in positive directions. It can also promote understanding that leads to improved relationships and deeper trust among clinicians and management.

A facility is most efficient and its health professionals are happiest when the primary goals of on-the-job communications are met: Clinicians understand the objectives of management and the reasons why these objectives are important; clinicians feel they can confide in managers who have their best interests at heart; managers hear and respond to clinician concerns; and management publicly recognizes staff for their dedication, skills and loyalty. Among Indian health program administrators, there are many examples of communication strategies that help promote staff retention.

Make it a Priority to Stay Informed



The more “team” leaders are aware of what is happening in their departments, the more effectively they can respond to challenges and head off problems that might lead to turnover among staff. Seeking input from staff is one essential aspect of staying informed. In some instances, people in management may have limited or no clinical experience. Establishing effective communication – through which clinical staff members have input into decision – making can result in better decisions, more efficient implementation of new ideas and significantly better morale among clinicians.

- One Indian health clinic manager makes it a practice to chat with the clinicians frequently, asking for feedback on how they are doing, how they think things are going in their departments and for suggestions on how workplace problems might be resolved, etc. This allows her to learn of clinicians who might be dissatisfied with aspects of their work and then arrange to meet with those health professionals and their supervisors to resolve any issues. When she learns that a clinician is considering leaving, she immediately meets with the clinician to determine what management can do to encourage the individual to remain on board.

Encourage Frank Discussions with Staff



Establishing a foundation of trust and confidentiality between managers and staff enables managers to learn personal details that might help to prevent a clinician’s departure.

- For example, one manager’s conversations with a key clinician allowed her to learn that although he was very happy with his job, he was considering leaving because of the lack of contact with family members living elsewhere. When the CEO and clinical director of the facility were informed of the clinician’s conflict, they met with him as soon as possible to discuss how his situation might be improved so that he would stay on. Eventually, through demonstrations of personal concern and expressions emphasizing the clinician’s importance to the facility – and through flexibility in scheduling and leave policies – the facility was able to accommodate the clinician and retain his services.

Hold Regular Staff Meetings

Group gatherings with all staff present can be beneficial, allowing for an exchange of opinions, strategic planning, expressions of appreciation for high-quality work, etc. Such meetings offer another opportunity for two-way communication. Management has a chance to inform staff about important issues affecting the facility and the community and policies that might have an impact on their work. And because the meetings provide a formal setting in which staff can provide feedback, management can learn about what's working and where improvements can be made, as well as resolve problems that could potentially lower morale and lead to staff departures.

Publicly Reward Performance

Keeping morale high generally helps keep turnover low. An excellent way to make staff feel appreciated and motivated is to publicly acknowledge exceptional performance on the part of dedicated individuals through announcements to the staff, awards, special events, time off, monetary awards, etc. Pizza parties or staff get-togethers sponsored by management, for example, can help foster team spirit and boost morale. Staff fundraisers might be sponsored to pay for activities or perks for the staff. Knowing how to motivate your staff and recognizing their hard work and dedication is a great way to show your appreciation.

- At one large Indian health hospital, Nurse's Day is celebrated during which appreciation for the nurses' hard work is expressed with gifts and a special meal catered by the administrative staff. Expressions of management appreciation such as this can have a positive impact on morale.

Use Exit Interviews

Often, departing staff members are willing to reveal negative feelings and opinions about the facility in exit interviews and surveys. The information they provide can be an excellent way to identify issues that management can address to avoid possible turnover in the future.