

Solving the CNA Shortage

Just over a dozen members of the Fremont County Board of Cooperative Education Services' Health Industry Partnership met in Riverton this fall to discuss a shortage of Certified Nursing Assistants and other topics.

Contributing to the shortage is a high turnover rate among new CNAs. Discussion of how to address the shortage included suggestions of more and better education to CNA candidates so they would know what the job entails, a multiple day pre-employment training workshop and a stronger focus on new employee orientation.

FC BOCES Career and Technical Director Kristen Benson said there were two main issues to address in dealing with the shortage, those being retention and recruitment.

"What does it mean to be fully aware of what the job entails?" Benson asked the group. In response, some of main retention issues cited included hard work, lower pay, shift work, people feeling overworked and a perceived lack of respect from supervisors. Many of the same issues were cited as recruitment issues.

Benson then asked for possible solu-

tions. Suggested was more job shadowing during the busy part of the day for CNA candidates, a training workshop for all job candidates that would include presentations from current CNAs and from different facilities, and development a video detailing the specifics of day-to-day work requirements.

Training topics could include knowledge of the Health Insurance and Portability Act (HIPPA) provisions, career pathways, work ethics, physical demands, respect and dignity of clients and work schedules, including shifts.

Establishing employee orientation sessions was also suggested for both current working CNAs and newly certified workers to address issues such professionalism in the workplace, appropriate dress, how to deal with conflict and communication skills. The video could cover topics such as intimate care, interviews with current CNAs and employers, explanations of different kinds of care in different facilities such as clinics, hospitals, and nursing homes. Training on how to establish good relationships with a patient's family was also discussed. Benson said the suggestions were all good ones and that many could be implemented.



Fremont County BOCES Career and Technical Director Kristen Benson walked members of the Health Industry Partnership through their fall meeting agenda packet of information.

Health Partners Learn About Pathway Project

Solutions for retaining and recruiting new CNAs consumed some, but not all, of the fall gathering of the Partners.

In other action at the meeting, HIP Partners approved a letter-head style for official communications and heard a presentation from Northern Arapaho Tribal Liaison Gary Collins on the Native American Pathway Project. Collins said the project's objective is to increase the number of medical physicians from the Native American Community. The project is housed at the University of Illinois. Collins said the new program would provide opportunities for one or two local reservation students with funding support from the Kellogg Foundation.

Attending the fall Health Industry Partnership meeting were representatives from Sinks Canyon Therapies, Wind River/Kindred Healthcare, Wind River Medical and Surgical Offices, Eastern Shoshone Tribe's 477 Program, Community Entry Services, Fremont Counseling Service, Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Wyoming Life Resource Center and Tribal Liaisons from the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes, plus Fremont County BOCES.

The next meeting of the Health Industry Partnership will be tentatively set for January 27 at the Wyoming Life Resource Center in Lander.

HIP Profile: Jenni Masson, Fremont Counseling

Fremont Counseling Service maintains offices in Lander and Riverton and provides quality mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment services throughout the county.

On a beautiful fall morning just a few short weeks ago, Supported Employment Consultant Jenni Masson, BS, sat down at her Riverton office to talk about her agency and her job.

"I work on the mental health side through the state's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation matching clients with employers," she said. "It's important to have the right fit so the job is beneficial to the employee and the work is of value to the employer." Masson explained that she works with a solid base of county employers, including businesses such as Bailey Tire and Auto Service plus Wal-Mart and K-Mart in placing clients in work environments. "We're a pretty small town here, so we've worked hard to carve out the best suited situation for everyone. We've had good success overall," Masson said.

When looking to place a client, Masson said she always looks first to locally owned businesses, as opposed to businesses such as national fast food chains. "Those jobs can come with high stress and low pay and we find the turnover there is quite high," she said. "Local employers, including Wal-Mart, help us with flexible scheduling including time off so clients can make their counsel-

ing appointments." She said Wal-Mart is her program's largest corporate account.

Fremont Counseling Service personnel offer a wide range of professional specialties within three major service areas, according to Masson, including programming in substance abuse treatment, for the severely permanent mentally ill and prevention services.

"Becky Parker directs our Substance Abuse program, which includes court-ordered therapies, a psychologist for psychological evaluations, intakes and marriage counseling," she said. Masson also said "wrap around" services are provided for the severely permanent mentally ill clients served by Fremont Counseling, including housing and outreach services plus providing activities for them within their respective communities.

"We also have a Prevention Services Division which works with all of the schools and the Community Resource Officers posted in the schools," she said.

Personally, Masson said she stepped into a job at Fremont Counseling after her graduation from the University of Wyoming. "I started as a job coach here, then became a case worker for the Department of Family Services. I returned to Fremont Counseling and I've been here ever since. Everyone here is so very helpful and I really like my job." She said.

Masson is excited about the Health Industry Partnership because she sees one outcome as better training for health industry



workers. "The more qualified folks we can have working and certified, the better."

She also said another potential outcome is teaching people early on how to develop coping skills for high stress jobs.

"This relates directly to what I do here. It's important for people to have access to resources such as Fremont Counseling. We provide balance and support for both employees and employers," she said.

Masson noted that one person in every four has some form of disability, including some that are hidden which result in people trying to cope with them privately. "People need to feel free, confident and comfortable to receive services from us. We're a service that everyone needs at one time or another in their lives. There's nothing wrong with that. Our work with employers here also helps to remove the stigma associated with receiving counseling services."

How to Manage Stress



Stress affects us all. If you can spot the symptoms, you can manage them.

General causes

A perceived threat will lead a person to feel stressed. This can include physical threats, social threats, financial threat, and so on. In particular it will be worse when the person feels they have no response that can reduce the threat, as this affects the need for a sense of control. Generally speaking, any threat to needs is likely to lead to stress being experienced.

Fear

Threat can lead to fear; which again leads to stress. Fear leads to imagined outcomes, which are the real source of stress.

Uncertainty

When we are not certain, we are unable to predict, and hence feel we are not in control and hence feel fear or feel threatened by that which is causing the uncertainty.

Cognitive dissonance

When there is a gap between what we do and what we think, then we experience cognitive dissonance, which is felt as stress. Thus if I think I am a nice person then do something that hurts someone else, I will experience dissonance and stress.

Dissonance also occurs when we cannot meet our commitments. We believe we are honest and committed, but when circumstances prevent us from meeting our promises, we are faced with the possibility of being perceived as dishonest or incapable (i.e. a social threat).

Life causes

There are many causes of stress in life, including:

- Death: of spouse, family, friend
- Health: injury, illness, pregnancy
- Crime: Sexual molestation, mugging, burglary, pick-pocketed
- Self-abuse: drug abuse, alcoholism, self-harm
- Family changes: separation, divorce, new baby, marriage
- Sexual problems: getting partner, with partner
- Argument: with spouse, family, friends, co-workers, boss
- Physical changes: lack of sleep, new work hours
- New location: vacation, moving house
- Money: lack of it, owing it, investing it
- Environment change: in school, job, house, town, jail

- Responsibility increase: new dependent, new job
- Stress at work

Six key stress factors for employees:

1. The demands of the job
2. The control staff has over how they do their work
3. The support they receive from colleagues and superiors
4. Their relationships with colleagues
5. Whether they understand their roles and responsibilities
6. How far the company consults staff over workplace changes.

Other stress indicators at work include:

- Sickness absence
- High staff turnover
- Poor communication between teams
- Bullying
- Lack of feedback on performance
- Value and contribution
- Technological change
- Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Dissatisfaction with non-monetary benefits
- Working long hours
- Boring and mundane work
- One-off incidents
- Uncomfortable workplace
- Lack of training



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