

The Business of Caregiving



The Edgewood Centre

Aligning Values and Business Strategy

When Patricia Ramsey took over the family nursing home business, the Edgewood Centre, with her brother, she knew that it would be a challenging journey. At that time in the mid-eighties, the organization's reputation in the greater Portsmouth, New Hampshire, area was "not the best," and having just earned her administrator's license, Ramsey was taking over as both owner and administrator. She recalls,

I was feeling a little green and just beginning to learn about long-term care and about this organization. ...[There was] an awful lot of work to be done. ...There had been a lot of turnover in management in the years prior to my coming on, and I think that lack of consistency and lack of clear expectations was very difficult for staff... so we just invested a lot of time and energy in really trying to make our expectations clear, about resident care, about customer satisfaction — before all those terms were fashionable.

The Edgewood Centre is a family-owned, for-profit business in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Built in 1972, Edgewood is a 156-bed facility providing skilled rehabilitation services and long-term care, with a staff of 230. About half the staff are licensed nursing assistants (LNAs, equivalent to certified nursing assistants in other states). Patricia Ramsey became its sole owner in 2003.



Rose Loomis, Andrew and Stephanie Maglio

The Business of Caregiving is a series of case studies that showcases exemplary employers in the eldercare/disability services industry. The organizations featured in this series have been selected to illustrate a "quality care through quality jobs" approach to sustaining and growing a long-term care business. All case studies, along with slide shows and podcasts, are available online at: www.PHInational.org/casestudies. The development of these case studies, along with web-based best practice descriptions, have been funded by the Hitachi Foundation (www.HitachiFoundation.org).

Over the years, Ramsey has built a strong team of leaders and staff who share her vision about what it means to live and work at the Edgewood Centre—valuing and respecting residents first and foremost, dedication to the highest quality care, creating a supportive and respectful work environment, creating opportunities for growth for staff and residents alike.

“People want to do a good job,” says Ramsey. “If they know that leadership shares that same vision, I think they’re really going to stay on board with you.”

A Great Place to Work

Tricia Cummings, Edgewood’s administrator, is to some extent typical of many Edgewood employees. She first worked at Edgewood as a part-time rehab aide the summer following her junior year in college. She loved the experience, and continued working there through her senior year. Following college, however, she took a job as a medical underwriter at an insurance company. “I was completely miserable,” she recalls. “It was just so different from my experience here.” After 3½ years she moved back to Portsmouth for another job and happened to see an advertisement in the paper for director of admissions at Edgewood. She landed that job. “I was just so happy to be back in this environment,” she says. Edgewood afforded her the opportunity to complete the hours of training she needed to earn her administrator’s license. A friend recalls that even in college, Cummings longed to be an administrator at a nursing home, so her current position is a dream fulfilled.



Tricia Cummings (left) with Patricia Ramsey

facility in the area. Now, according to Edgewood’s administrator, Tricia Cummings, there are several in the area, “so the environment is far more competitive.” The current economic climate, furthermore, has prompted more families to try to make do at home or seek a different level of care. It is in this context that Edgewood continues to create an environment where families want to place their relatives and where people living in the area want to work.

While clearly Edgewood has been on a customer-focused journey for nearly 25 years, the increasingly demanding business environment since 2005 has encouraged Edgewood to intensify its efforts to build a supportive work environment, in order to create an even more consumer-focused organization and one that attracts and keeps high-quality staff.

It was in this context that Edgewood partnered with PHI, a national organization that works with eldercare and disability service providers to improve the quality of jobs and the quality of care in both home and residential settings. PHI offered a suite of interventions that provided Edgewood with systems and skills to meet their business challenges and to continue to create a high-quality workplace.

PHI began its work with Edgewood in 1999 as part of a New Hampshire state health department community grant. The partnership deepened in 2005, when Edgewood became one of 12 northern New England long-term care organizations chosen to participate in the PHI Northern New England LEADS Institute.¹

The current business environment

When the Edgewood Centre was established, it was pretty much the only available skilled nursing

Quality Care through Quality Jobs

Ramsey found in PHI a partner with values that aligned with her own. PHI brands its work with the slogan “quality care through quality jobs.”

The foundation of a positive work environment is good communication, respectful relationships, and adequate support for doing one’s job well.

“It’s about doing the right thing,” Ramsey says about improving the work environment. “I’ve got to feel good when I come to work every day, and I want the people that I work with coming to work every day feeling good. Because in the end, if they’re not happy, our residents are not going to be happy.”

The foundation of a positive work environment is good communication, respectful relationships, and adequate support for doing one’s job well. The LEADS Institute offered Edgewood an opportunity to build a sustainable culture around these principles through training and technical assistance focused on communication skills, coaching in supervisory relationships, peer mentoring, and person-centered care. These interventions—known as the PHI Coaching ApproachSM—built on Edgewood’s existing workplace culture, which already offered a range of supports and advancement opportunities not often available to nursing assistants.

Providing opportunities for growth

To cultivate a positive workplace culture, Edgewood leadership deliberately looks for opportunities to promote from within. “If a person demonstrates competence and they are truly a person that has bought into

the Edgewood way of life, in terms of our culture, our philosophy, our way of doing things, and there’s an opportunity for growth, we feel they deserve that opportunity,” states Ramsey. In fact, three current department heads began their careers at Edgewood as licensed nursing assistants.

For entry-level workers, Edgewood offers several career ladder opportunities, including peer mentor, medication nursing assistant (MNA), restorative/wellness aide, and LNA team leader.

The Peer Mentor Program

The peer mentor program, introduced through the LEADS Institute, provides opportunities for experienced LNAs to advance, while simultaneously addressing retention of new hires.

In 2005, PHI trained Edgewood staff as peer mentor trainers. Having created the internal capacity to train their own LNAs as mentors, Edgewood went on to train 19 peer mentors in 2006 and 2007. Key elements of the training include communication and problem-solving skills and how to establish effective relationships with mentees.

Peer mentors receive a \$1/hour wage increase and provide mentoring, shadowing, and guidance to new hires in the first five to ten days of their employment. An LNA’s job can be extremely demanding, and the initial weeks and months can be overwhelming without the proper support.

Christina Edgerly, a peer mentor at Edgewood, wanted to take on that role because of her own experience being mentored. “I was peer mentored when I started here and I thought the program was great—it made me feel more comfortable,” Edgerly says. “I was able to ask questions. [My mentor] helped me succeed, gave me the confidence that I needed. I really wanted to be able to share what I learned with other people and give everybody else that confidence.”

To cultivate a positive workplace culture, Edgewood leadership deliberately looks for opportunities to promote from within.

The Medication Nursing Assistant Program

Edgewood has also provided financial support for many of its LNAs to participate in New Hampshire’s medication nursing assistant (MNA) licensing program — a career ladder that the state created for direct-care staff. MNAs administer all oral medications under the supervision of a licensed nurse.

MNAs receive a \$2 hourly wage increase above the LNA base rate upon completion of a three-week intensive training. Currently, Edgewood has nine MNAs on staff, eight of whom went through the training program while employed as LNAs at Edgewood.

Other Career Advancement Opportunities

In addition to peer mentors and MNAs, Edgewood has created other positions into which LNAs can move to advance their careers.

Three restorative aides/wellness specialists work in physical and occupational therapy and deliver spa services and reiki. LNA team leaders coordinate the activities of LNAs and receive \$1/hour additional wages. Edgewood also enables individuals in non-nursing departments such as activities, social work, adminis-

tration, or housekeeping to work toward their LNA license, which allows them then to assist anywhere in the Edgewood facility when needed.

Establishing systems for communication and supervisory support

Ramsey recognized many years ago that while nursing schools train nurses very well clinically, nurses often come to the job lacking management and supervisory skills. Over the years, she has put into place a number of training opportunities to improve the management skills of Edgewood’s nurses — yet such programs would often fall by the wayside when larger demands loomed.

Supporting Advancement

Delsa Minster was an RN in her native country, the Philippines. Because of difficulties in gaining her licensure when she moved to New Hampshire, and the birth of her first child, she started as an LNA at Edgewood in 2002.



Delsa Minster

When I came [here] the welcome that I could feel just amazed me. I didn’t drive yet, and my husband picked me up. If I would have to work later because of the needs of the resident, he would sit and wait for me, and he said: I can’t believe the place you work Delsa, everyone is just smiling and happy!

Within two years Minster had received an award as LNA of the year. When the opportunity arose to become an MNA leader, she jumped at it — Edgewood paid the full price for attendance on top of continuing to pay her wages while she was in the three-week training. She now is an LNA, MNA, and LNA team leader. She coordinates the work of the LNAs, schedules the appointments for the residents, assists residents if an LNA calls out, and distributes medications if a nurse is out. She has a reputation for being highly competent and supportive, with a great ability to multitask.

PHI Coaching SupervisionSM

When Ramsey was first introduced to the PHI Coaching ApproachSM — in the context of improving the supervisory skills of nurses — she saw something different.

“I felt that coaching supervision was something I was very interested in because it was an opportunity for systemic change.” The PHI Coaching Approach did not depend on specific leaders and staff members to sustain the program—it was designed to transform the organizational culture.

The PHI Coaching Approach to supervision helps employers build communication and problem-solving skills that are key to creating a respectful work environment and a strong foundation for relationship-centered caregiving.

Through the LEADS Institute, three staff from the Edgewood Centre participated in a nine-day train-the-trainer seminar that prepared them to deliver two-day coaching supervision training for Edgewood staff. These trained trainers, in turn, provided training to all Edgewood supervisors, department heads, and staff nurses and now act as resources to all staff in order to continuously build the five key coaching and communication skills (see box at right) that are at the core of the PHI Coaching Approach.

“Our philosophy,” Cummings explains, is that “when supervisors can develop a deeper relation-

ship with an employee — and empower employees to solve their own problems — nine times out of ten that employee actually has a better answer than the supervisor. There’s more ownership around the issue,

Essential Skills for Sustaining Organizational Change

Effective communication skills are the organizational competencies that are most essential to ensuring that change initiatives are successful and sustainable.

By developing these skills (see below) across an entire organization, leaders and staff are able to increase participation in organizational change initiatives; solve problems; hold one another accountable; and continually improve systems.

The PHI Coaching Approach, adopted by Edgewood, helps organizations — and the individuals in those organizations — build five core skills:

- **Active Listening:** Using body language, paraphrasing, and asking clarifying questions to listen attentively and ensure understanding.
- **Self-Management and Self-Reflection:** Being conscious of assumptions and biases, and setting aside emotional reactions that can get in the way of hearing someone else’s perspective.
- **Clear, Nonjudgmental Communication:** Communicating clearly and directly about expectations or concerns while using language free of blame and judgment.
- **Collaborative Problem Solving:** Using critical thinking and communication skills to build effective teams, ensure accountability, and resolve problems.
- **Participatory Leadership:** Engaging and empowering staff at all levels to participate in envisioning and implementing a respectful, relationship-centered culture.

The Edgewood Centre attributes the application of these skills — which staff have learned through PHI Coaching Supervision, Peer Mentor, and Communication Skill trainings — to its success in establishing and sustaining communities, consistent assignment, and person-centered care. The PHI Coaching Approach has helped Edgewood engage staff in more participatory processes for problem-solving and decision-making that strengthen teams and tap into the leadership and strengths that are found throughout the organization.

whether it is related to a resident or to their own personal job performance. And the hope would be that

“We now have staff of all disciplines as part of what I can truly call a team.”

– Patricia Ramsey

person would be more committed to the job and to the organization, and stay.”

The PHI Coaching Approach to Communication and Problem Solving

When Edgewood’s management discovered the power of the PHI Coaching Approach, they expanded their change initiative beyond their initial intent to address supervisor/employee relationships. To ensure that everyone was using common terminology and had a common set of skills, Edgewood implemented a series of one-day communication training sessions with non-supervisory staff.

“We’ve really achieved a culture,” says Ramsey. “It’s about how we communicate with one another, about how we solicit feedback, how we run meetings. We now have staff of all disciplines as part of what I can truly call a team. Coaching has helped level the playing field.”

Ramsey also points to greater efficiencies associated with the organizational shift in the locus of decision-making: “It has been huge. When [staff] do come to me, they are just coming for guidance and they are such fixable problems. It’s just amazing, when you really do empower the staff, who are in the position to do the work every day, to make those changes, it gets done quicker, faster, and more efficiently.”

Since behavioral change requires constant practice and reinforcement, Edgewood continues to work on

ways to more fully embed these essential communication skills more deeply into its organizational culture.

It is an ongoing process, but staff already feel the impact. Several speak of important shifts in their relationships with co-workers.

“I’ve noticed my co-workers are holding each other accountable,” says Amy Arnold, an LNA team leader. “They’re not being as judgmental as before; they know how to talk to each other now without jumping down each other’s throat or being accusing. ...Coaching is great because it doesn’t feel like you’re being sent to the principal’s office. You’re able to talk to the person about the issue at hand, what they feel happened, and what they think can be changed.”

“The stepping back [learned in the communications skills training] is key,” notes Nancy Prince, an LNA team leader. “Especially when it’s emotional, when you have someone who is very upset, you need to step back and listen. People are now more aware of how they speak to each other. It’s more respectful. It’s more professional. It just makes a better environment all the way around.”

Edgewood staff repeatedly report that the organization’s leadership is highly accessible.

Participatory Leadership

Edgewood has an open door policy when it comes to communication. Edgewood staff repeatedly report that the organization’s leadership is highly accessible, including being a constant presence on the floors and helping out with residents when necessary. This is unusual for nursing facilities, but at Edgewood, both Ramsey and Cummings have LNA licensure, and Ramsey also has her MNA license.

The leadership is also credited with a willingness to listen to and consider concerns and ideas. They engage staff in discussions and brainstorming around important issues — something that the staff highly values.

For example, during a recent downturn in their short-term rehabilitation business, Ramsey moved quickly to respond to the challenge. She went right to the staff, explained the situation, and asked for ideas. She notes staff responded “quickly and willingly.” “There were positions that were open that we chose not to fill,” Ramsey recalls. “There were people in positions who very willingly moved to another job.”

Staff offered many possible solutions, and in the end, Edgewood used the opportunity to create more private rooms in order to increase revenue. This positive response to an unexpectedly deep economic recession demonstrates the creativity unleashed by Edgewood’s commitment to participatory leadership.

Building and empowering communities of staff and residents

The LEADS Institute had two inter-related goals: to improve the quality of jobs for caregivers and to improve the quality of care.

Community Structure

In 2007, with technical support from PHI, Edgewood — like other organizations on the path of culture change — re-structured itself into communities in the interest of creating a more home-like, resident-centered environment where decisions are informed by residents and those working closest with them. At Edgewood, a community is defined by an area with a community kitchen and approximately 30 bedrooms. Each community has “a consistent group of staff who are working with and for the same group of residents,” says Tricia Cummings.

Although there were a small number of infrastructure changes, the major change was organizational. Edgewood created three communities, each with a nurse manager, a community leader (a department head with added community responsibilities); and a new team leader position (LNAs who coordinate LNA activities in the community on a given shift). Team leader positions have been filled by LNAs promoted from within.

“Our motivation was to align ourselves more in relation to the residents that we care for... so it would be less about departments and more about the resi-

This positive response to the recession demonstrates the creativity unleashed by Edgewood’s commitment to participatory leadership.

dents,” says Cummings. Dietary and housekeeping staff are members of a community. Individuals are also cross-trained. So, for example, dietary, recreation, and day care staff have gone through feeding assistance programs and they are available in each community to provide that support.

Ramsey attributes Edgewood’s successful implementation of its three communities to the ethos of participation and the staff’s coaching and communication skills. Earlier attempts at establishing smaller communities had been unsuccessful because “we didn’t really involve those [communities] or the entry-level staff in the decision-making process of change. We all agreed that our culture needed to be different, needed to be more resident-focused ... but we didn’t engage everyone in how to achieve that.... It was not a participatory process.”

Nicki Garvey, Edgewood’s coaching coordinator, explains further: “Coaching has been a supportive tool as we work to change our organization’s culture, such as organizing into communities and consistent

Ramsey attributes Edgewood's successful implementation of its three communities to the ethos of participation and the staff's coaching and communication skills.

assignment. The people who spearhead [these changes] are those who understand the value of coaching itself, so it's all incorporated in how they are presenting things out in the communities and giving people a voice. So I think coaching works more than in one-on-one relationships."

Shifting decision-making to the community level has required the development of good communication skills and a certain amount of "letting go" on the part of senior leadership — they have to trust that community leaders and team members can work through problems. Yet the effort has paid off.

"It's amazing the level of decision-making that's going on at the community level and at the resident



Erica Duncan and Beverly Phelps

level," notes Ramsey. "It's because the caregivers — and when I say caregivers I'm talking about the LNAs, the nurses, the social worker, the recreation staff, the dietary aide who is now called a life enhancer — it's that whole team of people that are supporting decision-making with the residents." This, Ramsey says, "has enabled the management staff

to be doing more things that we all want to be doing — looking at macro-level, [how] we're going to stay competitive, [how] we can continue to keep our beds filled, so that we can survive in this very competitive marketplace and...deal with all the external forces that are acting upon us so that we can be more proactive than reactive."

LNAs take ownership of the care and well-being of their residents.

Consistent Assignment

Following the shift to a community structure, Edgewood took on the challenge of implementing consistent assignment, an organizational model in which residents are cared for by the same caregivers from day to day. Consistent assignment benefits the caregiver, the residents, and their families. It provides the opportunity to establish routines, to nurture relationships, to notice changes, and to provide consistent information. Edgewood asked residents and workers with whom they would like to work, and paired accordingly.

LNA McKerry Doyle notes, "I love my consistent assignment. It's so nice to come in the morning and know who you're taking care of and where you're going to be. It's allowed me to develop a really close relationship with several of the residents."

Sam Shappell, community leader and RN, calls the shift to consistent assignment "fabulous." She points

out how comforting it is for residents to know who will be caring for them. And equally important, she notes that LNAs take ownership of the care and well-being of their residents. “It’s not someone they might not see for another two months,” Shappell says. This is very significant for quality of care, as LNAs notice and bring to her attention any changes in condition — like greater confusion, a redness on the heel, signs of

The staff recognize Edgewood as a unique place to work.

a urinary tract infection — and these issues can be addressed quickly, preventing additional health problems.

A Supportive Workplace

Edgewood staff talk about the many additional ways they feel supported by the organization. Whether it is the spa treatments that Edgewood offers them every six weeks, flexible schedules, health insurance coverage,² a relatively high staff ratio (1 to 7 caregiver to resident; 1 to 6 on the dementia unit), or the mutually supportive environment, the staff recognize Edgewood as a unique place to work.

In fact, one of the first supports Ramsey put into place specifically to address worker retention was an on-site day care center, which has been operating continuously since 1985. A survey of staff, many of whom were single mothers, brought childcare to the top of the list of desired support, and Edgewood leadership moved quickly to convert two teaching rooms into childcare classrooms. “That program filled up in months,” says Ramsey, “in months!” It also served as a recruitment tool. “The minute we advertised it: Come work at the Edgewood Centre and bring your

children to work with you and let them have breakfast. It was huge!”

Edgewood subsidizes childcare for children and grandchildren of staff. Recently, in order to recoup costs, the center was opened to other families in the region. The day-care center gives Edgewood the opportunity to sponsor intergenerational activities: children visit with residents throughout the week and join them for exercise groups, craft activities, and parties. These activities, which provide meaningful interaction for Edgewood’s elders, help to solidify Edgewood’s reputation in the community as a great place to live and work.

John Poirier, president and CEO of the New Hampshire Health Care Association, affirms that it is this “family environment for employees and people that live at Edgewood [that] ensures quality outcomes for each of them. ...Working there is more than simply a job. It becomes a significant part of the lives of the employees.”

A Family Environment

Susie Simpson, an LNA who was cared for in the Edgewood’s childcare center when her mother worked there, now brings her children to work with her. “Now I’m all grown up and I’m back at Edgewood, and I have two young daughters that go [to the center]. So it’s kind of like a family environment, you know, passing on the generations,” she says.



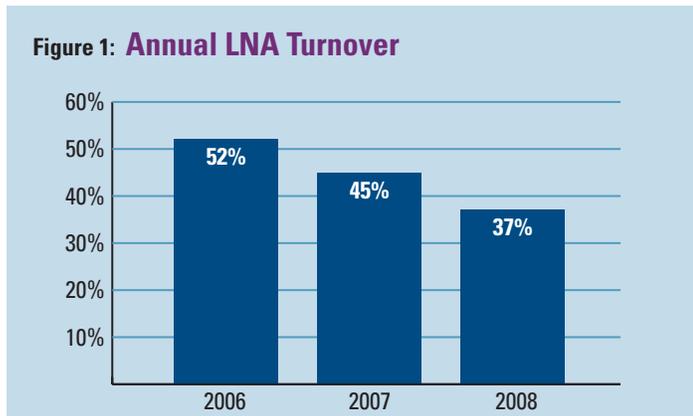
Susie Simpson and her daughters

Experiencing tangible results

“When you have a stable workforce, everyone’s life here is just so much better,” states Cummings. Indeed, Edgewood has achieved measurable results.

Employer and Employee Outcomes

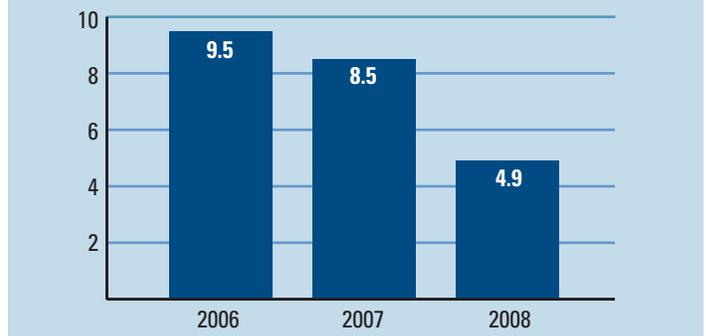
During the three-year LEADS Institute, turnover rates for LNAs declined substantially, from 52 percent to 37 percent (see Figure 1).



Using the PHI Business Investment Calculator,³ the Edgewood Centre estimates that this reduction in LNA turnover translates to a savings of \$60,000, plus 248 hours of supervisory/administrative time saved that was previously spent in recruitment and hiring. In addition, the decreased turnover enabled Edgewood to eliminate its in-house LNA training program, for a cost savings of \$30,000.

Call outs (which occur when employees call with less than 24 hours notice that they will not come to work that day) can be a large problem in nursing homes, directly affecting residents, as well as those workers who are left to pick up the slack. From 2006–2008, Edgewood recorded a substantial decline

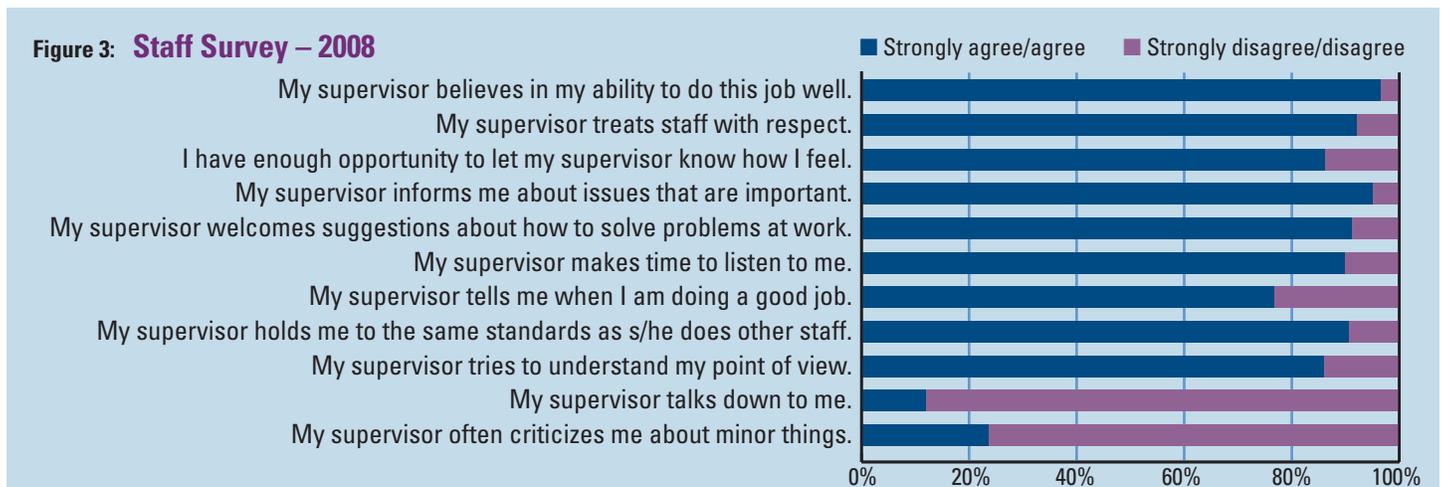
Figure 2: Annual Ratio of Callouts per LNA



in call outs as well (see Figure 2), with an estimated savings of \$80,000.

Decreases in turnover and call outs suggest that Edgewood’s LNAs were more satisfied with their jobs as a result of the changes implemented during the 2005–2008 period. Annual employee satisfaction surveys confirm this, showing statistically significant improvements in the areas of organizational support (including adequate supervision, satisfaction with career opportunities, fair and respectful treatment, and communication of information), and general satisfaction (loyalty towards the organization, satisfaction with the job, sense of personal accomplishment, intent to continue the job for the next two years, and extent to which the employee would recommend Edgewood as a good place to work).

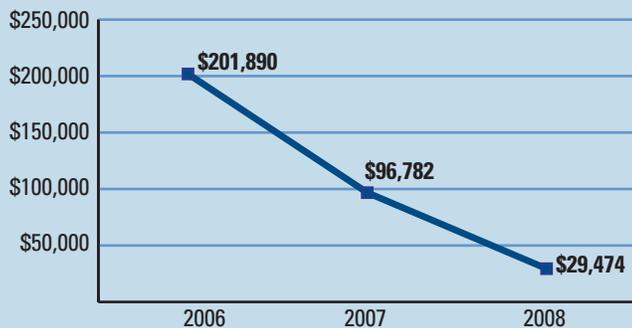
In 2008, additional items were added to the survey to measure supervision more deeply. Figure 3 shows the very positive results for 11 additional items.



In addition to measurably increasing staff satisfaction, Edgewood’s new community structure, consistent assignment, and low turnover have resulted in a healthier workforce.

Nursing assistants have the highest rate of injury of any occupation as measured by work days lost. Back injuries and muscle tears are particularly common — and expensive for employers. Significantly, Edgewood has experienced a dramatic decrease in workmen’s compensation claims — an 85 percent decline from 2006 to 2008, representing a savings of more than \$277,000 (see Figure 4). Similarly, from 2008 to 2009, lost workdays due to work-related injuries dropped from 73 to 4.

Figure 4: Workers Compensation Claims

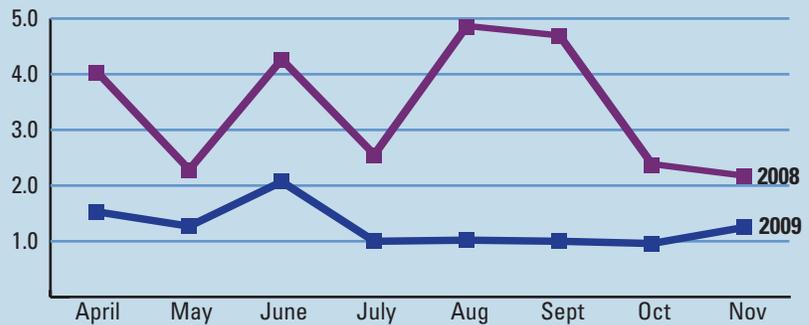


Cummings attributes this change to consistent assignment: “What happened differently this year than last? Consistency, so people are more familiar with resident routines, they are working with the resident every day, they would know if there is a change in condition so that they are better prepared to care for that individual.”

Resident Outcomes

Being better prepared to care for residents also impacts resident clinical outcomes. Since fully implementing consistent assignment, Edgewood’s pressure ulcer rate “has plummeted.” The average monthly

Figure 5: Monthly Pressure Ulcer Rates Decline



rate of 3.39 from April to November 2008 fell to 1.26 in the same months in 2009 (see Figure 5).

Consumers also appear happy with the services Edgewood delivers. In the past four years, between 88 and 100 percent of surveyed residents and family members have reported that they would recommend the Edgewood Centre to others — an indicator that is considered to be one of the best proxies for overall satisfaction.

Finally, Edgewood staff repeatedly hear stories that confirm for them that they are on the right track. “There was a family member who stopped a staff person and point blank said: ‘I do not know what kind of communication class you are sending your staff to, but it is evident that you are. And whatever it is, I would keep it up,’” comments Cummings.

A Stellar Reputation

All of these outcomes lead to a continued strengthening of Edgewood’s reputation as a quality service provider in the community, putting them in good stead in this competitive environment. They have managed to keep their long-term care beds full, without spending their resources on marketing. Ramsey attributes this to Edgewood’s stellar reputation: “What I explain to the staff is our marketing is about you, and you, and everybody doing the best job so that when a resident leaves here happy, they tell the neighbor, they tell the doctor, they tell the hospital case manager. We mess up once and it’s our reputation on the line.”

Ramsey goes on to explain that she handles admissions, and continually receives phone calls from people who heard from a neighbor or friend about their experience at Edgewood, and who are very keen to place their relative at Edgewood, too. “You know, I hear that a lot,” Ramsey remarks. “[This] is reassuring to me that we must be doing something right. To me, that’s the best barometer.”

What makes it all work?

What holds all of these efforts together is a highly cohesive team that has created a learning environment — a willingness to entertain and try out new ideas generated by staff as well as a willingness to acknowledge and learn from mistakes.

As John Poirier from the New Hampshire Health Care Association observes, “Edgewood uses a true team approach to ensure all employees are heard and valued.”

Edgewood leadership models coaching practices and the principles of participation.

Edgewood leadership models coaching practices and the principles of participation. They have taken a dynamic approach to addressing organizational problems.

When asked what lessons she has learned during Edgewood’s culture change journey, Donna Maloney, HR director, observes, “Learning it’s all possible. I genuinely believe it is now. Every day there is a new situation — a roadblock, a crisis, a small problem, and we work through it. I’ve come to understand that by listening, by talking, we can work it out. You really need to look at what you’re trying to accomplish and realize that it’s going to take everybody to make it work.”

Edgewood’s supportive environment has cultivated natural leadership at various levels throughout the organization. For example, Sabrina Paradis was the first LNA team leader, and she has helped to pilot most of the innovations that have then been introduced throughout the new communities.

“If there’s an issue on the floor... some of the staff we have [who] didn’t talk a lot are now actually speaking up because they feel more equal on the floor,” observes Paradis. Nancy Prince, an LNA team leader, confirms this viewpoint: “It goes back to the team work. There are no problems that can’t be solved, and the way we go about it — it’s not the boss talking to the worker. We’re a team.”

In addition to strong teamwork and participation, Edgewood has been intent on establishing systems that can sustain their culture change efforts. These systems include establishing a coaching and communication training program that all staff are expected to attend, along with mechanisms for providing refreshers and boosters that serve as reminders and opportunities to practice. Other new systems include the re-organization into communities; new job descriptions, roles, and responsibilities; and a new performance evaluation system that aligns with other changes.

Finally, as all of these changes and practices deepen within the organization, Edgewood is building



Sabrina Paradis and Sue Menter

an organization-wide team that reflects their values and philosophy. This may mean helping staff who do not share Edgewood's vision to move on to a more suitable environment at another organization, while continuing to hire employees who explicitly share Edgewood's philosophy of care and work practices.

An important lesson from the Edgewood perspec-

tive is the long-term nature of change, particularly change in organizational culture, employee behavior, and team building. The Edgewood Centre is on the path of continuous improvement; change requires persistence, good humor, and a clear vision of the kind of organization one wants to build.

"I feel we just have a really great team, and that's what has taken a very long time to build," says Ramsey. "So when you talk to the department heads, you'll see some longevity. And I hope that wasn't by accident. I hope it's the result of a lot of work, and finding the right people who also buy into our vision and share what we want in terms of quality. It's taken a long time, but I guess that's okay."

"Edgewood uses a true team approach to ensure all employees are heard and valued."

– John Poirier, NH Health Care Association

Endnotes:

- 1 The Northern New England LEADS Institute was a three-year foundation-funded initiative to improve direct-care jobs through training, technical assistance and cross-learning opportunities, and to establish quality person-centered care.
- 2 Edgewood's health insurance is graduated based upon longevity, contributing 55% of the individual premium and 25% of the dependent coverage during the first year an individual is on the plan, and 85% of the individual premium and 25% of the dependent coverage thereafter.
- 3 PHI's Business Investment Calculator is designed to help employers in settings that provide services and support to elders and individuals with disabilities to measure the expense of staff turnover, in comparison to investments in retention interventions. For more information, email: calculator@phinational.org

About the Author Marcia Mayfield, MPH, is the PHI Director of Evaluation. She is responsible for the design and management of evaluation systems and studies for PHI's training, organizational development, workforce development, and policy initiatives.

PHI

PHI (www.PHInational.org) works to improve the lives of people who need home and residential care—and the lives of the workers who provide that care. Using our workplace and policy expertise, we help consumers, workers, employers, and policymakers improve eldercare/disability services by creating quality direct-care jobs. Our goal is to ensure caring, stable relationships between consumers and workers, so that both may live with dignity, respect, and independence.

