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Creating a Culture of Career Pathways for Professional Caregivers


Today's Panelists



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Course Objectives

- Understand key workforce trends impacting caregiver recruitment and retention.
- Identify evidence-based strategies to support career advancement and professional growth.
- Reinforce how the use data to align training, recognition, and engagement initiatives with workforce stability goals.
- Identify practical strategies that boost morale and retention through structured recognition and development programs.




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Current State

Change and Need

Demographics

- 1/1/2026 – First Baby Boomer to turn 80, approximately 10K per day turn 80
- 2026 – 15% of the senior population will be over 80
- 2033 – 30% of the senior population will be over 80
- 2045 – population of over 80 estimated to double – 15m to 30m



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On the Verge of Recovery

Percent Change in Health Care Sector Employment Feb 2020 - Dec 2025

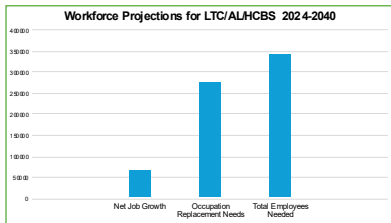
Category	Percent Change
Physicians' Offices	13.4%
Outpatient Care	13.4%
Home Health	19.0%
Hospitals	10.9%
Nursing Homes	-1.7%

Source - AHCA Workforce Report 2026

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Feb 2020 - Dec 2025

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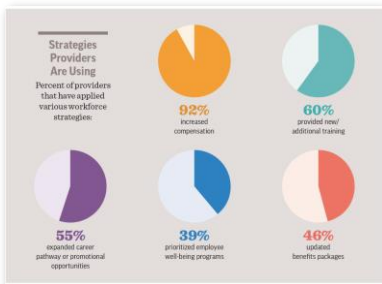
Workforce Needs



Source: Projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics



Strategies



Source - Provider Magazine - AHCA Workforce Report 2026





Driving Instability

Understanding

Turnover Patterns

- 40-70% turnover – still the norm
- Highest risk – 0-90 days of employment
- Variables
 - Supervisor
 - Unit/Area
 - Workflow/workstream
 - Culture



Root Cause - Top Drivers of Turnover

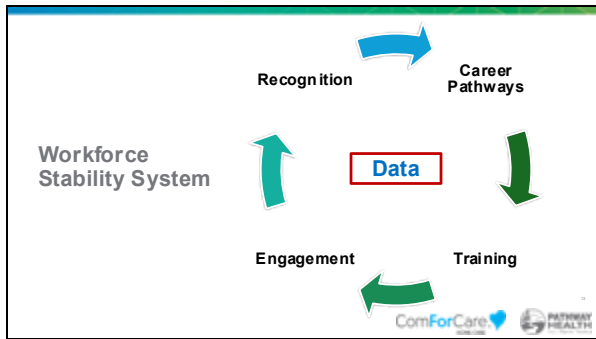
- Lack of visible career growth & advancement pathways
- Inconsistent or ineffective onboarding experience
- Limited feedback, recognition, and feeling undervalued
- Frontline leadership capability gaps (communication, support, coaching)
- Training-to-role mismatch (not aligned with real job demands)

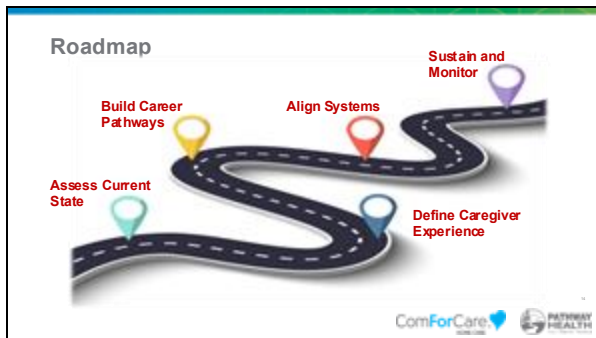




Leadership Roadmap


From Root Cause to Workforce Stability





1. Assess Current State

- Turnover (overall + by role/unit)
- 30/60/90-day retention
- Exit interview themes
- Engagement scores
- Agency usage & vacancy rates



The image shows a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow blazer, sitting at a wooden desk. She is looking down at several documents and a laptop. The background is a blurred office setting with a plant and a printer.

At the bottom of the slide are the logos for "ComForCare" and "PATHWAY HEALTH".

Leadership Tactics

- Build a monthly workforce dashboard
- Segment data by unit, role, and tenure
- Conduct stay interviews quarterly
- Review data in leadership meetings



2. Define the Caregiver Experience

- Hiring → onboarding → first 90 days
- Consistency of onboarding
- Clarity of expectations
- Access to support



Leadership Tactics

- Standardize onboarding process
- Assign trained preceptors
- Implement 30/60/90-day check-ins
- Use onboarding checklists
- Review the Onboarding experience – Fresh set of eyes

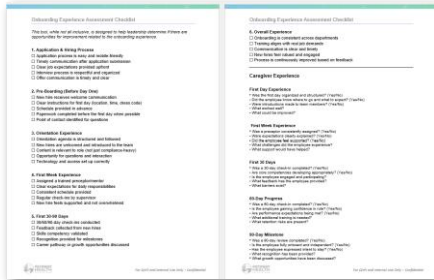


Onboarding experience – Fresh Set of Eyes

- What does it actually feel like to be a new caregiver entering your organization?
- Application to orientation
- Ask them:
 - "What surprised you about your first week?"
 - "What was confusing?"
 - "When did you feel most supported?"
 - "When did you feel least supported?"



Resource



3. Build Visible Career Pathways

- Career Pathways:
 - Create direction
 - Increase engagement
 - Improve retention
 - Build internal pipeline
- Defined role progression
- Skills & competency requirements
- Training alignment
- Pay progression tied to growth



Leadership Tactics

- Conduct career conversations quarterly
- Identify high-potential caregivers early
- Provide stretch assignments
- Offer cross-training opportunities
- Build preceptor/mentor roles
- Post internal opportunities first
- Create skill-based promotion criteria
- Track internal promotion rates
- Provide training pipelines



Leadership Tactics

Define role-based career progression

- CNA → CNA II → Med Aide → LPN → RN

- Non-clinical tracks: Preceptor, Scheduler, Lead, Quality roles

Map competencies and advancement criteria

- Skills validation
- Behavioral expectations
- Tenure and performance standards

Align training to each level

- Role-specific education
- Cross-training opportunities
- Certification pathways

Integrate mentors and preceptors

- Assign experienced staff to support development
- Create formal preceptor roles with expectations

Connect progression to compensation and recognition

- Pay increases tied to advancement
- Recognition of milestones and certifications

Communicate pathways clearly and consistently

- Visual career ladders
- Ongoing career conversations with leaders



4. Align Training, Recognition & Engagement

- Training based on:
 - Performance gaps
 - Turnover data
 - Clinical quality outcomes
 - Staff feedback
- Recognition tied to behaviors/outcomes
- Engagement driven by feedback



Leadership Tactics

- Link training to quality metrics
- Recognize retention milestones (30/60/90 days)
- Reward skill progression
- Highlight high performers tied to outcomes
- Implement leadership rounding/calls
- Act on engagement feedback
- Alignment is not about doing more—it's about making what you do work together



Leadership Tactics

- Engagement
 - Stay interviews
 - Feedback loops
 - Leadership rounding
 - Engagement surveys
- Remember
 - Care
 - Connect
 - Coach
 - Contribute
 - Congratulate



5. Measure, Adjust & Sustain

- Ongoing metric tracking
- Leadership accountability
- Continuous improvement
- Measure → Review → Adjust → Improve → (repeat)



Leadership Tactics

- Monthly workforce reviews
- Leader scorecards
- Tie outcom es to performance goals
- Continuous feedback loops





Boosting Morale and Retention

Through Structured Recognition and Development Programs

Foster a Culture of Professional Caregiver Excellence

Structured Development That Builds Engagement and Retention

- **Embed person-centered care principles** into onboarding and ongoing education to reinforce caregiver purpose, confidence, and connection to outcomes.
- **Align training** to ensure caregivers understand both the "what" and the "why," strengthening meaning in their work and improving job satisfaction.
- **Use real-world care scenarios** to build competence and confidence, reducing stress and increasing caregiver effectiveness in daily practice.
- **Support growth through interdisciplinary case reviews, coaching, and timely feedback,** creating clear pathways for professional development.
- **Incorporate frontline caregiver input** into training design to ensure relevance, elevate caregiver voice, and strengthen engagement.



Aligned Training That Supports Professional Growth and Retention

Aligned Training that Supports Professional Growth and Retention

- Develop interdisciplinary, partner-aligned education that reinforces shared accountability and elevates caregivers as key contributors to care outcomes.
- Reinforce the value and impact of the professional caregiver role through coordinated training that highlights their influence on safety, continuity, and recovery.
- Utilize technology-enabled learning platforms to provide accessible, consistent, and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Co-develop clear care protocols and escalation pathways, reducing uncertainty and burnout while improving confidence in decision-making.
- Promote a team-based, person-centered approach that reduces fragmentation and fosters a stronger sense of belonging and professional respect.



Implement Meaningful Recognition Programs

Celebrating Caregivers to Improve Morale and Reduce Turnover

- Establish formal recognition programs (e.g., Caregiver of the Year, peer recognition, milestone awards) that celebrate excellence and reinforce organizational values.
- Recognize caregiving excellence and compassionate care, highlighting the full impact caregivers have on clients and families.
- Create ongoing, visible recognition opportunities (e.g., monthly spotlights, client testimonials, team shout-outs) to sustain morale and engagement.
- Tie recognition to career pathways and advancement opportunities, reinforcing long-term growth within the organization.
- Leverage recognition to strengthen culture, increase job satisfaction, and reduce turnover by ensuring caregivers feel valued, seen, and supported.



Training in Action – Professional Caregiver Engagement

Caregiver Experience in Practice:

- Caregiver role and day-to-day responsibilities
- Real-world caregiver scenario or challenge
- Impact on caregiver confidence, decision-making, and job satisfaction
- Support tools and resources utilized (training, coaching, technology)

Engaging and Developing Professional Caregivers:

- How is training delivered to actively engage and support caregivers?
- How are skills reinforced, validated, and sustained over time?
- How does ongoing development strengthen confidence, competence, and career growth?



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Bringing It All Together

Key Takeaways for Leaders

Workforce stability is built—not managed

- **Understand the root causes**
 Turnover is a system outcome
- **Make the future visible**
 Career pathways drive engagement
- **Lead with data and intention**
 Align training, recognition, and engagement
- **Create consistent experiences**
 Onboarding, development, and leadership matter
- **Reinforce through recognition**
 What gets recognized gets repeated




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Final Thoughts

When leaders make growth visible, they turn jobs into careers—and organizations into places people choose to stay.



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