

Stress, patient overload top reasons for nurse turnover

December 8, 2005

Despite work-related stress topping the list of turnover factors, 28% of healthcare facilities increased overtime in the third quarter, according to the quarterly nurse staffing survey by Nursefinders Inc. Patient care load and staffing ranked second in terms of impact on nurse attraction, retention and turnover, according to the survey.

In addition, the survey found that a large portion of healthcare executives feel it is unlikely they will reach sufficient staffing levels in the near term, despite efforts to attract nurses through increased hourly wages and referral bonuses.

"Facilities struggling with staffing shortages, especially during high-demand periods such as flu season and winter, may find themselves increasing overtime and patient care loads far beyond what they would consider to be ideal levels," said Nursefinders Inc. CEO Bob Livonius.

The survey also found that nearly one-fourth (24%) of healthcare facilities need to hire more than 15 nurses in the fourth quarter of 2005 in order to reach sufficient staffing levels. Many facilities continue to increase hourly wages as a means of attracting much-needed nurses. According to the survey, 55% of facilities increased hourly wages in Q3, up from 49% in Q2. In addition, more facilities report increases in referral bonuses this quarter, rising to 21% in 3Q from 12% in the previous quarter.

Nurse turnover remained high, with 39% of healthcare facilities reporting that five to 15 nurses resigned or terminated employment with their facility during the third quarter of 2005.

"There is a potentially costly impact of these turnover findings both financially and, most importantly, for patient care," said Livonius. "We are particularly concerned for the impact on smaller healthcare facilities. The near majority of our respondents have less than 200 nurses on staff, and a loss of up to 60 nurses annually can be devastating."

The survey was conducted with a panel of 96 healthcare executives, representing healthcare facilities that vary in revenue size and number of beds, including hospitals, long-term acute care and others, from across the country.

According to the survey, these are the top factors affecting nurse turnover:

1. Work-Related Stress	57%
2. Patient Care Load/Staffing	56%
3. Effectiveness of Direct Manager	53%
4. Scheduling Options	51%
5. Recognition	51%
6. Compensation	41%
7. Participation in Decision-Making	33%
8. Competence of Clinical Staff	31%
9. Growth Opportunities	24%
10. Ancillary Support Personnel	22%

Source: Nursefinders Inc.