

## PREPARING FOR AN AGING WORKFORCE

As employers in senior living and care organizations, not unlike many other businesses, you may be facing the challenges of an aging workforce many of whom are performing physically demanding jobs until their retirement. The largest challenge is the older workers' ability to physically perform the essential functions of the job safely and without injury to themselves, co-workers, or residents. Here are some suggestions on a proactive approach to avoiding injuries in an aging workforce to ensure their continued engagement in performing the important duties and responsibilities of caring for older persons.

- ❖ Develop and implement a reduced workload for aging staff

A phased retirement plan may work for your company, by allowing the employee to reduce their hours and days of the week gradually over time to an eventual part-time status. As most employees age, time spent with family, friends and favorite hobbies, become more important; this approach allows for balance, presenting the "best of both worlds" continuing to work while incorporating fulfilling activities with family and friends.

- ❖ Have a flexible on-call work schedule

You may want to develop a flexible or On-call work schedule that is convenient for you and the employee. Flexible, on-call work schedules can result in reducing absenteeism, short staffing, and retention of experienced employees.

- ❖ New job in a new department

If an employee is no longer able to physically perform their job as they age, there may be a position in another department that will fit the employee's physical abilities, experience, and skill sets. For example, a NAC who has been working in the skilled nursing department may be able to transition to the assisted living department. Review and evaluate the employee's skill set and experience to determine if a new job is beneficial to both the employer and employee.

- ❖ Cross training your employees

When evaluating future positions and exit strategies for your aging employees, start the cross-training process now to assist the employee in developing the skills needed for less physically demanding jobs in the future. For example, if a NAC would like to transition to a receptionist or concierge position, allow the employee to cross train several days a week for a few hours to gain experience and determine if it is a good fit for a potential future job.

- ❖ Utilize an aging experienced employee as a coach

Supervisors are busy. Peer coaching from experienced staff can be a great tool to assure that new employees use and perform appropriate company procedures while also assisting the supervisor in job performance evaluation of a new employee.

Together we can navigate the safety of our aging workforce.