

Training course for long-term care staff to advance knowledge and skills related to the care of persons living with dementia



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Pennsylvania implemented a pilot program, the Staff Training to Advance Resiliency and Retention ladder program to enhance paths for long-term care career advancement and provide access to experts in topic areas specific to long-term care.



The “What”

The literature suggests one contributing factor to staff turnover in long-term care (LTC) facilities is the lack of career advancement in the LTC industry. Most LTC facilities do not have career ladders or a mechanism for staff to have an area of specialization that reflects common disease processes of the residents for whom they provide care. Beyond this, many do not have dedicated educators, or lack educators with expertise in subject matter delivered to LTC staff. Education is often delivered virtually through learning management systems without the ability to observe skills to assure the staff person is able to translate knowledge into their day-to-day care of residents. These problems can lead to difficulty with staff retention, low job satisfaction, and ultimately sub-standard care of residents.

The STARR (Staff Training to Advance Resiliency and Retention) ladder program was developed as a pilot program in the South Central (PA) LTC-RISE initiative to address the twofold problem of lack of paths for career advancement and access to experts in topic areas specific to LTC. Pennsylvania’s LTC-RISE initiative is funded through the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) cooperative agreement. South Central LTC-RISE created three tracks for this pilot: Dementia Care, Infection Prevention, and Emergency Management. As part of the recruitment, facility leaders identify staff they felt have potential to lead colleagues as champions in one of the tracks. Along with leadership support, facilities are encouraged to identify staff in all areas at any level.



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The STARR program is structured as a three-month training program. The first month, following an introductory live webinar, participants complete foundational training for their respective track that is self-paced online. In the second month, two virtual sessions

are delivered along with a two-hour onsite educational workshop with the participants where skills are demonstrated by the educators and participants are able to practice. In the third month, participants co-lead the delivery of education and skills to colleagues at their facility. Pre- and post-program surveys are administered to assess individual participant perspective on the program.

This program at its foundation, demonstrates how academic institutions can leverage expertise and existing relationships with LTC facilities to advance education for LTC staff.

The “So What”

Evaluation data collection is near completion. Early data has demonstrated 22 participants successfully completed at least one of the three tracks offered. Initial qualitative feedback supports the use of in-person training to reinforce and increase confidence in skills taught. This program at its foundation, demonstrates how academic institutions can leverage expertise and existing relationships with LTC facilities to advance education for staff, while presenting leaders in LTC with concepts like specialization and career ladders to address workforce retention and resiliency.

The “Now What”

The South Central LTC-RISE team intends to refine the STARR ladder program based upon feedback from educators and participants through August 2023. STARR will resume with refinements including revised surveys for participants pre- and post-program, and will add a longitudinal mentor, longitudinal survey, and touchpoints to support full implementation and assessment.

For academic institutions who strive to be highly engaged and support LTC communities in their respective regions, ELC funding provides a mechanism to develop and

implement high quality education, mentorship, and relationships that provide sustainable community support for LTC facilities. Furthermore, the content is developed to address gaps such as infection control training that is appropriate for personal care environment or emergency management planning that is realistic for a small personal care home yet meets the foundational requirements in emergency management. In summary, this work has identified a need for high quality, LTC specific education and in person training that reflects the workforce and the population they serve.

Key contributors to this project include Nicole Osevala, MD from the Penn State Health South Central LTC RISE Team.