

COVID19 Hot Topics for Independent Living: How to Incentivize Staff to Work During a Pandemic?

During this uncertain time, staff members of Life Plan Communities – and all aging service providers – face many barriers to continuing to work: illness, caregiving responsibilities, lack of reliable transportation, and fears of contracting the virus. LPCs are finding ways to creatively incentivize and engage their staff teams so that as many of these barriers are minimized as possible.

LeadingAge offers the following “Hot Topics” for incentivizing staff to continue to work during the COVID-19 outbreak, drawing on guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as best practices in the field.

Seventeen Great Ideas from LeadingAge Members to Motivate Staff to Continue to Work:

1. **Take-Home Meals.** While many LPCs are delivering meals to residents who are ‘staying at home,’ some have also offered these meals for free or discounted “take out” to staff.
2. **Ordering Groceries/ Sundries.** LPCs are helping staff members find those essential items – which are often sold out in stores – but allowing staff to purchase or order groceries and other sundries through a ‘pop-up’ style convenience store.
3. **Childcare for Staff Children.** So much of the conversation around supporting working parents has included LPCs setting up childcare services. Some are holding these services on-site, while other members have worked together with local churches, synagogues, and daycares to offer childcare in established settings nearby to the campus.
4. **Relaxation Rooms.** Yesterday’s breakrooms have been transformed by some LPCs into relaxation, meditation, or quiet prayer rooms for staff. These wellness-focused areas give staff a safe place to unwind and decompress while on the job.
5. **Gift Cards to Local Restaurants.** One great way to support local staff AND local businesses who are affected by the pandemic is to give away gift cards to local restaurants for take-out meals. LPCs or other providers who do not have their own meal programs have used this idea as an incentive for staff.
6. **On-Site Laundry.** To address the fear staff may have of taking coronavirus home to loved ones, some LPCs are cleaning uniforms, scrubs and work outfits on-site for staff, so that they have coronavirus-free clothing for both at work and at home.
7. **Extra Hours/ Extra Shifts.** To incentivize staff to work exclusively for their organization, some LPCs have ‘bought out’ staff hours through extra shifts, moving staff from part to full time, or offering extra hours.
8. **“Hero Pay.”** Called by many names, pay increases for direct caregivers – especially those picking up extra shifts or hard to fill roles – are another way LPCs are encouraging staff to come to work.
9. **Thank You Emails.** With residents who are home-bound, some LPCs have created dedicated email, website, or other virtual means for residents to express their gratitude to staff.
10. **Virtual Social Events.** Believing that “those who play together, stay together,” some LPCs are setting up virtual social events for staff to enjoy “downtime” together and stay connected – especially if working remotely or on dispersed teams.
11. **On Site “Remote” Meetings.** Social distancing has inspired some LPC leadership teams to establish on-site remote meetings. This helps team members have necessary meetings while protecting team members from spreading the virus to others.

12. **Bus/ Shuttle to Work.** In areas where LPC staff are dependent on public transportation – which may or may not be running – some LPCs have set up staff shuttles to address transportation needs and minimize the staff members' exposure to the general public.
13. **On-Site Living Quarters.** At the request of dedicated staff members, some LPCs have organized on-site living quarters for those staff members who wish to 'ride out' the pandemic at work.
14. **Self-Help Groups/ Counseling.** Many members have mobilized their Employee Assistance Programs to offer staff safe, confidential and reliable places to seek emotional and mental health supportive services.
15. **Recruit Retired/ Former Staff.** Some LPCs and other providers have reached out to retired or former staff to promote a return to work program. The extra sets of hands both help relieve – and motivate – staff who enjoy being reunited with former mentors and colleagues.
16. **Deep Leadership Succession Planning.** An extended emergency response can quickly overtax a leadership team; some LPCs are addressing this by identifying two or three leaders who can competently fulfill essential leadership roles. This allows leaders to “rotate on and off” duty while ensuring the community has stability of leadership at all times.
17. **Food Trucks on Campus.** Always a fun way to add variety to work, some LPCs have recruited food trucks to come to campus to offer staff free and fun alternatives to on-campus meals.

Have idea, or see one that is missing? Let us know so that we can share with everyone! Email us at covid@leadingage.org.

As the coronavirus pandemic and response continues to evolve, new and updated resources for all aging services providers will be posted to www.leadingage.org/COVID19. Please visit frequently to get the latest news and updates.