

ISSUE 1 2021

ARGENTUM QUARTERLY

MENTAL WELL-BEING AND THE SENIOR LIVING WORKFORCE

Exploring issues, needs, and resources
in the context of COVID-19

STATE OF THE SENIOR LIVING WORKFORCE

Jobs, Hours, and Wages
2020 Q4

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OnShift's next-generation human capital management platform fundamentally transforms the relationship between healthcare organizations and their employees. Our innovative approach to recruitment, hiring, workforce management and engagement fosters a culture where people want to work. That's why thousands of healthcare organizations rely on OnShift's integrated suite of software and services to dramatically reduce turnover rates, decrease costs and improve the quality and continuity of care.

ABOUT ARGENTUM

Argentum is the leading national association exclusively dedicated to supporting companies operating professionally managed, resident-centered senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve. Since 1990, Argentum has advocated for choice, independence, dignity, and quality of life for all older adults.

Argentum member companies operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services. Along with its state partners, Argentum's membership represents approximately 75 percent of the senior living industry—an industry with a national [economic impact](#) of nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars and responsible for providing over 1.6 million jobs. These numbers will continue to grow as the U.S. population ages.

Argentum's programs and initiatives are driven by its membership. For more information about joining Argentum, please visit [argentum.org/membership](https://www.argentum.org/membership). Learn more at [argentum.org](https://www.argentum.org).

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

This issue of *Argentum Quarterly* touches on some difficult topics. That's one reason there's a notice at the bottom of this page.

But another is to address stigma: No one is immune from experiencing problems with mental well-being, especially now. While statistics reveal that mental health disparities are as great as those of physical health ones, all of us have seen the toll mental illness can take even on the strong, the bright, the kindhearted, the successful.

While there are many different ways to address mental well-being in the workforce, what these have in common is leadership that is aware, compassionate, and ready to act. An engaged, productive, and purposeful workforce demands and deserves leaders willing to educate themselves on the facts and scope of mental and emotional well-being, to establish "no-stigma zones" of safety and trust, and to bring in resources and support when needed.

This issue contains information to get a start on an element of work life that could turn into a second public health crisis—one that might be avoided, if we act.

I'd like to thank OnShift for their sponsorship and contribution to this issue on this important topic. While there's much to be concerned about, there is also a lot of hope.

EXPERTS WANTED FOR THE SENIOR LIVING EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE

Argentum invites thought leaders, innovators, and subject matter experts to [submit session ideas](#) for the [2021 Senior Living Executive Conference & Expo](#). The conference is scheduled for September 13-15, 2021 in Phoenix, Ariz. **Deadline for submissions is April 16.** Argentum's annual meeting attracts more than 2,500 executives from nearly 1,000 companies representing assisted living, memory care, independent living, continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs), real estate investment trusts (REITs), capital providers, industry partners, press, and academia. The robust educational program features deep dives, educational tracks, a vibrant show floor, Mainstage sessions, and an awards celebration.

Sara Wildberger
Editor

CONTRIBUTING TO ARGENTUM QUARTERLY

Argentum Quarterly welcomes submissions of research, analysis, thought leadership, and insights from upper-level executives from our industry, peers in other industries, consultants, academics, and other subject matter experts. We also welcome proposals for short book and article reviews. **Please contact the editor directly at swildberger@argentum.org** to determine its suitability. Some articles are commissioned by invitation. Editorial contributors are not paid, nor do they pay for inclusion.

FOR HELP RIGHT NOW

If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255). You can also text a crisis counselor by messaging the Crisis Text Line at 741741.



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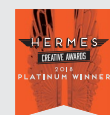
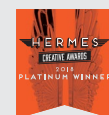
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Argentum Quarterly is published quarterly by Argentum, 1650 King Street, Suite 602, Alexandria, VA. Certain Argentum member companies receive subscriptions for staff as part of their membership.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO *Argentum Quarterly*, 1650 King Street, Suite 602, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 703.894.1805. Printed in USA. Copyright 2020.

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MAKING EMPLOYEE MENTAL WELL-BEING A TOP PRIORITY IN 2021

Facing the struggles of the past year gives us an opportunity to show our commitment and strengthen engagement

By Mark Woodka



Mark Woodka
CEO
OnShift

I write this column not as a mental health expert but as someone who considers themselves a very concerned employer. Over the past 12 months, I've kept a close, albeit remote, eye on my own workforce and how they're coping during this time. The pandemic has greatly magnified the importance of mental health and raised the stakes for employees in terms of providing the right resources to those who need them.

You know the breadth of challenges your frontline workers have faced over the past 12 months. Financial stresses due to changes in household incomes; struggles to secure childcare as daycares and schools closed; isolation from the normal social circles; and of course, the anxiety that comes with fear of contracting the virus and potentially bringing it home to their loved ones—and all these on top of the worry and stress brought on by witnessing some residents they so dearly care about fall ill or grow lonely in isolation.

I can't imagine what kind of toll all of the above, over the course of several months, takes on a person—which brings me to my next point.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT

Although we're all living through the pandemic together, it's important to remember that every person will continue to experience it individually through the lens of their particular situations, stressors, and ability to cope.

Many organizations, specifically supervisors, took their investments in supporting employee mental health to a new level in 2020—all with little to no training in identifying and addressing such challenges. And since the long-term psychological effects of the pandemic have yet to be understood, these efforts will become even more critical moving forward.

I think providers have a great opportunity here: a chance to soften the stigma and create an atmosphere that allows for more open dialogue when it comes to mental health struggles.

Here are some of the strategies senior living organizations have put in place to communicate their commitment to employees' well-being, while also making mental health a more approachable topic throughout the organization.

The CDC reports that during August 2020–February 2021, the percentage of adults with anxiety or depressive disorder symptoms increased from 36.4% to 41.5%

Also from August 2020–February 2021, the number of adults who needed but did not receive counseling or therapy increased from 9.2% to 11.7%.

Vahratian A, Blumberg SJ, Terlizzi EP, Schiller JS. Symptoms of Anxiety or Depressive Disorder and Use of Mental Health Care Among Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, August 2020–February 2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 26 March 2021. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7013e2>

Overcommunicate. I don't think you can overcommunicate in this environment, especially when it comes to making employees feel safe at work. Share important information on mitigation strategies, safety protocols, and new procedures you have put in place, to relieve some of the stress associated with working on the front lines during a pandemic.

Continue to communicate with employees regularly in a post-pandemic world as you launch initiatives and programs that impact them. Confirm that new policies, procedures, and other updates are well understood, and recognize that just because you say something does not mean everyone hears it.

Show you're listening. If you're curious as to how you as an employer can better support your employees, simply ask them where they need help. While each response should be addressed individually, you will likely uncover some themes that can be worked into larger initiatives. Understanding employee needs helps you tailor your support efforts and makes employees feel like they are part of the solution.

Build trust. Strive to form relationships with employees where they feel comfortable coming to you with their challenges. Encourage employees to talk about their tough days at work, either with their manager or amongst themselves. Doing so helps them learn they are not alone and builds camaraderie across teams.

This effort can also extend to having open conversations about mental health challenges, which are much more common than many may think. Encourage willing staff members to share personal stories and invite others to speak about their experiences in a safe space.

Additionally, be sure to regularly remind employees of the mental health resources that are available to them through your health plan. This repetition not only ensures employees know what's available, but that there's no shame in using these services. If an employee needs a service or counseling that you do not currently offer, direct them to one that is available in your community or online. A few days later, check in with these employees to ensure they are getting the help they need.

TECHNOLOGY NOW PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN WELL-BEING

Technology has been a critical part of providers' communication strategy throughout the pandemic and will be the key to success in the future.

Through OnShift's messaging features and pulse surveys, our clients have been able to share important updates in real time and get immediate feedback. Additionally, they've gained valuable insight into how they can best support their employees and used that insight to implement meaningful programs geared at curbing stress and promoting mental health.

Our hardworking employees are the lifeblood of our organizations, and anything short of a continued effort to support their mental health would be to the detriment of all of us. Healthier employees are more satisfied at work, provide better care, and most importantly live more fulfilling lives. In the end, that's all that anyone could really ask for.

In a survey done in June, the CDC reported 11% of adults had considered suicide in the 30 days before taking the survey, and of these people, 22% were "essential workers."

In the same survey, 26% reported trauma or stressor-related disorder symptoms.

CAUTION: EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

It can happen at any level. These tips help you recognize the signs and signals and put practices in place to prevent it.

By Sheela Stevens, CSW



**Sheela Stevens,
CSW**
Stevens Consulting

It has been over one year since the introduction of COVID-19 in the United States. Senior living employees have had to quickly adapt to fight the challenges of the pandemic. They have faced long hours and a constant barrage of changing directives on visitation, testing, and vaccination protocols, all while endeavoring to provide the best services to residents possible.

As a result, we're facing a hazard: Employee burnout, defined as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation, usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration." And burnout is not confined to direct care workers. It can happen to managers and senior levels as well.

How do you recognize burnout when it occurs—and how can you help prevent it from happening? Here's an overview:

RECOGNIZING SIGNS AND CAUSES

- Employees expressing frustration and snapping at co-workers
- Forgetfulness and difficulty focusing
- Low excitement for the job; just showing up
- Not sleeping well, not exercising, consuming more alcohol or unhealthy foods
- Ceasing participation in spiritual or social activities (even virtually)
- Arguments and difficulties in home life

PREVENTING BURNOUT

- Personal recognition can be a burnout vaccine. Set your calendar to acknowledge employee birthdays and other important life events (passing an online course, graduations, weddings, etc.).
- Keep recognition and celebrations realistic in consideration of time. A personal note and a treat or sitting down for a chat and a coffee can make a big difference.
- Highlight individuals' COVID-19 efforts and their dedication to resident care.

- Be consistent in showing recognition—what you do for one, do for all.
- Share information and resources on healthy eating, how to get restful sleep, relaxation, and exercise.
- Encourage listening to your body—this helps prevent health problems that can be caused by or exacerbated by stress.
- Establish a culture that values taking earned time off as important to health.
- Try to reduce or eliminate stigma about asking for help.

One of the most effective ways to help prevent burnout is to add courtesy. The state of being frantically busy can lead us to forget the practice of common courtesies. Even through a mask, people can tell if you're happy or stressed. Saying please and thank you and speaking genuinely and warmly is a sign of professionalism. It can also help reduce frustration and increase gratitude, not only among employees, but within yourself as well.

Sheela Stevens has worked in the senior living industry for 20+ years. Her firm, Stevens Consulting, LLC, has helped national and local businesses with resident care operations, policies and procedures, and professional trade content on senior living, regulatory compliance, and quality assurance.

WEBINAR: CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

Join speakers Chris Guay, Founder and CEO, Vitality Living; Aaron D. Webb, Esq., CEO at CHI Living Communities; and organizational development expert Joanne Smikle, PhD, for this discussion on cultivating resilience for our workforce and communities. Free to Argentum members.

Thursday, June 3, 1-2 PM ET. [Register here.](#)
Sponsored by: [ThriveWell Tech](#)

TAKING A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Cultivating well-being takes collaboration, commitment, and creativity—everyone in the community has something to contribute

By Schekesia Meadough, VP, quality & clinical operations, American House Senior Living

While the pandemic affects all walks of life, those of us in the senior living industry have seen the tremendous impact isolation, fear, and uncertainty can have on this vulnerable population. And as a result, it has been our mission to ensure all policies, procedures, resources, and technology align with the highest standards of clinical care and wellness programs, enabling our residents to feel safe, secure, and connected—body, mind, and spirit.

Early in the pandemic, we at American House established an all-hands-on-deck COVID-19 task force. This collaborative team included members from clinical operations, wellness, life enrichment, human resources, communications, culinary, risk management, facilities management, and the executive team.

We needed the voices, perspectives, and expertise from every discipline working together to ensure our entire team was aligned and mobilized on policies and procedures to address challenges head-on.

This taskforce then cascaded vital information to our residents and their loved ones about best practices around safety and well-being like visitation protocols, dining, activities, and preferred methods of communication.

We then got to work creating innovative programs for the new normal that would keep our residents safe, happy, active, and engaged.

EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AND TRAINING

Mental well-being for our community starts with our team members, so we continue to put as much focus on them as possible to ensure they are set up for success.

At the beginning of the restrictions on activities, **we shared as much information as possible with our team.** This included information about infrastruc-

ture changes, as well as trainings and guidelines around areas such as PPE deployment and use. There was a concerted effort to stay in daily contact with employees, which made them feel connected, empowered and safer coming to work every day.

When visiting restrictions went into effect, **we gave our employees carte blanche to come up with creative ways for residents to keep their hearts, hands, and minds busy** while staying in touch with family members who were no longer allowed to see their loved ones in person.

Giving employees ownership over the programming instilled a sense of pride in the work they were doing.

We also established a food pantry for employees so they wouldn't have to visit grocery stores and other public spaces, which gave them peace of mind knowing their contact with outside individuals would be further limited.

Our Life Enrichment Team found innovative ways to keep our residents having fun and laughing. Some residents created music videos while others used household items to recreate famous pieces of artwork.

And our pen pal program connected residents across multiple communities, which allowed them to make new friends.

Mind games like “quaranteasers” kept the mood light and gave our residents a chance to emerge from isolation and see the smiling faces of their neighbors. Activities that could be conducted in the hallway, such as Bingo and yoga, allowed us to maintain safe social distancing practices and kept residents active and connected.

Most importantly, our wellness team and on-site community staff focused on keeping our residents and team members safe. As the pandemic progressed, we developed and rolled out the PURE



Schekesia Meadough, RN, BSN, CDP
VP, quality & clinical operations
American House Senior Living

program, which follows CDC guidelines and focuses on creating a safer and cleaner experience and environment.

Part of our [HomeSafe move-in program](#), the PURE program gives residents, team members, and guests a sense of security that we are committed to doing everything we can to ensure the safety and well-being of each resident, team member and guest.

Mental well-being for our community starts with our team members, so we continue to put as much focus on them as possible to ensure they are set up for success.

REDUCING ANXIETY THROUGH CLINICAL EXPERTISE AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Eliminating (or reducing) anxiety for our residents has always been an area of expertise for us. During the pandemic, we had to double down and get even more creative.

One way to help was by ensuring all residents had access to, and understanding of, technology tools that enabled them to stay in touch with loved ones. Seeing the smiling face and hearing the voice of a family member went a long way to warming the hearts of our residents.

While FaceTime and Skype were a bit daunting for some at first, residents grew to love them as instant connection points to their loved ones outside of the community. In fact, in some cases, technology helped families grow even closer than they were before the pandemic. The positive impact on the mental well-being of our residents cannot be overstated.

On the clinical side, we leaned heavily on both in-person and telehealth mental wellness services to ensure our residents had expert resources during any times of anxiety or signs of depression. Keeping in close contact with family members also gave us insights into their loved ones mental health, and we were able to be proactive in bringing in outside help to curtail the negative impact of isolation during quarantine and social activity restrictions.

Offering this service, and rolling it out in a safe way, was one route we took to ensure the residents had another connection point in addition to their familiar day-to-day caregiving staff.

DOING WHAT WE DO BEST

COVID-19 reinforced the importance of best practices we had in place before the pandemic, and we continue to build upon them to enhance the holistic well-being of our residents, team members, and guests.

From day one, our CEO, Dale Watchowski, encouraged us, “Now more than ever, we must continue to deliver the highest quality care and service. We must do whatever it takes to take really good care of our employees so they can take really good care of our residents.”

It takes a village to battle the unforeseen effects of this virus and emerge smarter and healthier on the other side—and a village is exactly what we have created. Combined with proven best practices and a willingness to innovate and learn along the way, our guiding principles of compassionate quality care and services for seniors is making the senior living industry safer and more enriching for the people we are privileged to serve every day.

American House resident Sheila Keys shared her gratitude with us recently. Prior to the pandemic, she moved into our Brownstown community in Taylor, Mich. Among many other wonderful descriptions, Sheila is an author, a Sam’s Club member service specialist, and the niece of civil rights icon Rosa Parks.

“American House really cares about our health,” she says. “I really believe that. They follow all safety protocols, check temperatures, wear masks, and clean absolutely everything. I get extra care here that I wouldn’t have gotten if I were still living in my own house. It is nice to have someone who cares if I am getting what I need.

“The extra attention I get at American House helps to fill me up so I can keep helping and serving others. The staff at American House does a beautiful job demonstrating what my Auntie Rosa always taught me: stay calm, take action if something isn’t right, and treat people the way you want to be treated.”

Schekesia Meadough, RN, BSN, CDP, is American House’s vice president of quality and clinical operations. In this role, she is responsible for the creation and implementation of nursing care and wellness strategies, policies, processes, and programs across American House’s portfolio of more than 60 communities in five states.

A LOOK AT LEVELS OF BURNOUT

By Dr. Jacquelyn Kung, CEO, Laura Ewing, chief of staff, and Ed Frauenheim, author and content collaborator, Activated Insights

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. People experiencing burnout feel depleted or exhausted, may become cynical about their job, and tend to perform their roles less effectively.

Workplace burnout occurs when a person feels:

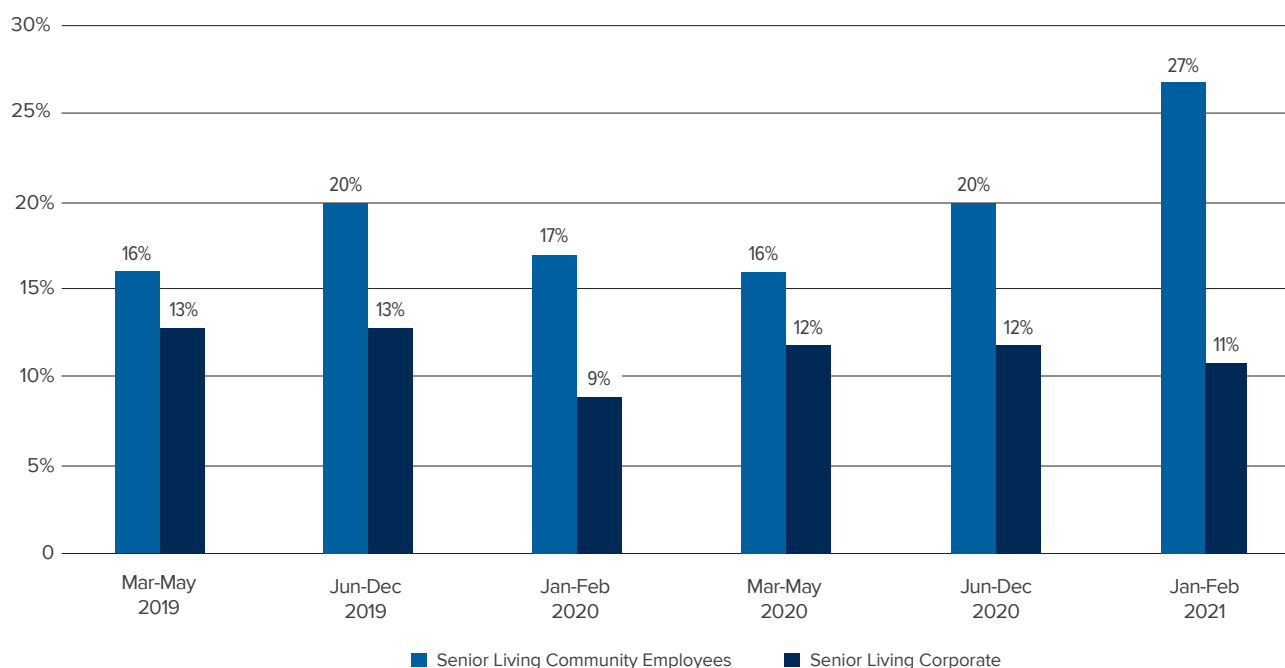
- Limited control of their environment and over their schedule
- Limited participation in decision making and lack of clarity of their work
- Communication is poor, especially with management

Using this definition from WHO, Great Place to Work—the global workplace authority and parent company of Activated Insights—created a “burnout risk factor index” of nine statements from its Trust Index survey. When an employee responds positively to only six or fewer statements, they are likely experiencing burnout.

- In its database covering many industries, Great Place to Work discovered that found one-fifth, or 22 percent, of employees overall are burned out.

- For aging services, Activated Insights examined survey results from more than 330,000 employees in senior care over the past two years. **We discovered that employee burnout at senior living communities—independent living, assisted living, and memory care—rose in the second half of 2020.** That trend was similar to the year before the onset of COVID—and the absolute levels were not much different from burnout levels before COVID.
- January and February of 2021 mark a significant change in employee burnout: At just 17 percent in January and February 2020, it climbed 59 percent in the first two months of this year.
- **Burnout rates are far lower in the corporate headquarters of organizations in the aging services industry.** Employees in those settings often have more autonomy in their work and clarity about company direction. What’s more, they may not have borne the direct brunt of surge after surge of the deadly COVID illness, including the emotional toll of witnessing residents die without family members nearby and the fear of contracting the disease or passing it to loved ones.

Burnout, Before and During COVID-19

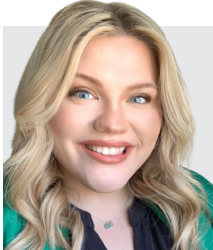


Source: Activated Insights

REDUCING THE DAILY STRESSORS

For an employee working toward a better life, a ready source of understanding and informed assistance can make the difference in finding a foothold—and achieving success.

By Sara Wildberger



Sarah Brady
Workforce
Development
Coordinator
Family Scholar House

In 2020, Argentum received a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to Healthcare Apprenticeship Expansion Program (HAEP) to develop apprenticeships in senior living and related allied health occupations. Part of this involved ensuring apprentices had services that would help them succeed as they trained and established themselves in their new career paths. Administering this critical help is Family Scholar House, based in Louisville, Ky.

“The mission of Family Scholar House (FSH) is to end the cycle of poverty and transform our community by empowering families and youth to succeed in education and achieve life-long self-sufficiency,” Sarah Brady, workforce development coordinator writes in an email interview.

“FSH assists disadvantaged single parents—women and men—and former foster youth in addressing challenges in completing the post-secondary education and credentialing necessary for careers and transition out of poverty.”

Helping with these barriers to success involves looking beyond the typical scope of a career entry program. For instance, FSH “provides 279 affordable apartments on our five Louisville-area campuses, on-site childcare, coaching, advocacy, access to technology, transportation, and record-setting emergency assistance during the pandemic for basic needs, such as diapers, meals, and pantry items.”

The HAEP program apprentices can face many of the same challenges, needing services ranging from helping through credentialing processes to domestic violence assistance. Yet these essential services aren’t typically handled by employers.

A subgrant from HAEP led to the creation of the FSH Response Center—staffed six days a week by professionals providing connections to emergency and basic “wraparound services.”

In 2020—the pandemic year—FSH served 11,233 Kentucky households, providing 67,951 services, including helping 95 people graduate from college—37 of these going into health careers. Also in 2020, FSH received a national Rise Prize, one of only five mature organizations to be recognized for a two-generation program model to end poverty.

The following is excerpted from a longer email interview.

Q. If an individual needs support and can’t find it, what affect could this have on the person, the workplace, and the family?

A. Lack of support can hinder an individual’s ability to show up, succeed, and advance in the workplace. When an individual struggles to secure consistent childcare, their attendance at work suffers. If their car breaks down, and they can’t afford to get it fixed, they lack transportation to get to work. Examples like this cause employees with potential to fall between the cracks and not succeed in the workforce.

This is where Family Scholar House steps in to meet individuals where they are and provide comprehensive support and wraparound services as they navigate life both inside and outside of work. This includes assessing their physical and mental health, conducting benefits assessments to see what benefits they can access, and identifying supports already in place that empower the individual.

Our programs puts safety nets in place such as emergency assistance, connection to community resources, and career coaching, so that many of these situations can be quickly resolved.

Q. Is there a type of support that may come as a surprise to employers but that workers need?

A. All Family Scholar House staff are trained in trauma-informed care, allowing us to effectively approach needs and stressors of our participants with sensitivity.

Often, participants have personal issues that can interfere with their performance and attendance at work but that they do not feel comfortable addressing with their managers, supervisors, or even human resources departments.

By building relationships through video chat with participants, our staff are able to develop trust relationships that allow workers to get the assistance they need with these issues, that often include domestic violence, custody issues, and other non-financial related issues. Many times, employers are not equipped or trained to help an employee through these types of situations, and that is where Family Scholar House excels.

Q. What types of support have been most important during the pandemic?

A. Continued social distancing due to COVID-19 will be our reality for the foreseeable future, making it necessary for us to effectively serve our apprentices and participants remotely rather than in person.

In order to reduce the need for people to come to us in person for assistance, FSH has built capacity for all programming through a state-of-the-art Response Center and proprietary database, built on the Salesforce backbone, to ensure that programs and services are easily accessible, meaningful, and impactful.

The FSH Response Center technology includes video capabilities so that our professional staff can see participants and vice versa, giving the feeling of being physically present with each other. This face-to-face interaction is critical, because much is lost when participants and staff cannot see each other. This is especially relevant as phone conversations make it difficult to gather the sensitive information needed to help participants and their families.

With the technology implemented, the Response Center provides our professional staff with translation capabilities, allowing them to interact with those for whom English is a second language. Live, professional staff are available six days per week, allowing underserved individuals to have the increased flexibility of being able to access our compassionate and knowledgeable staff to access all the assistance needed in one place, from experts they have come to trust in their community, to get the help they need.

Q. What factors might prevent workers from seeking support? What are some ways to overcome these barriers while maintaining respect and compassion?

A. These include concern over privacy or cultural norms that deter asking for help, and ultimately fearing judgment or that a request may be held against them in the future when they apply for advancement and pursue opportunities within the company.

Having an outside partner like Family Scholar House allows for individuals to feel their conversations are confidential, and our team is trained in building rapport and gaining trust while connecting individuals to resources they may not be aware exist and walking them through the process.

Additionally, language barriers can sometimes keep workers from seeking support. Family Scholar House has bilingual staff and translation capabilities, allowing us to interact with those for whom English is a second language.

Q. What would FSH say to employers considering programs that address obstacles to success?

A. In order for our community and our nation to succeed, we need for those most vulnerable individuals and families who require government and social service support in order to survive to have the opportunity to thrive as they participate in our community's economy. This can only be achieved through a combination of formal and informal education and access to resources that not only offer new opportunities but also instill hope as they work toward their future success.

Family Scholar House has many partnerships, including employers, trade unions, educational institutions, and other nonprofit organizations throughout our region and nationally. For each partner, we take the time to fully understand their needs and goals to develop solutions or connections. We are passionate about providing permanent solutions to bring underserved people out of poverty and into self-sufficiency, and we are happy to dream together with anyone who shares this goal.

For more information about Argentum's Healthcare Apprenticeships Expansion Program, contact Megan Robinson, project manager, apprenticeships and workforce development, mrobinson@argentum.org.



MORE KNOWLEDGE, LESS STIGMA

Digital resources and programs for mental well-being are emerging as practical, comfortable, and accessible for employees

By Sara Wildberger



Doug Berkowitz
Senior vice president
of operations
LifeSpeak

With the convergence of two trends brought on by the pandemic—a rising need for assistance resources and the greater use of online resources—more companies are looking to websites, apps, and software that can give employees the tools and techniques they need to manage and enhance well-being.

One such online service is LifeSpeak, a digital health and well-being platform with a collection of thousands of proprietary “microlearning” videos, podcasts, tip sheets, and other types of content developed and vetted by acknowledged experts. Topics range from mental health and stress management to professional development and preventive health. Recently, Vi Living has made the program available to its employees.

In this Q&A, excerpted from a longer interview, Doug Berkowitz, senior vice president of operations at LifeSpeak, discusses using online resources and reducing stigma.

Q. What are some of the advantages of offering mental well-being resources online?

A. Accessibility: A well-being program needs to be user-focused; your user needs to be able to get to the resource whenever and wherever they are. Now, with people not being in the office, you can’t have the traditional sort of brown-bag lunches with a training coming in at a specific place and time. It often wasn’t working even before COVID, because people couldn’t always make their schedules work for it. COVID just exacerbated that.

Ease of consumption: You don’t have to invest 45 minutes in a training session. You can have your employees watch a video, let’s say, on stress management or diversity and inclusion, when they have time.

User choice and control: It’s not what you as an employer want to push out to employees. It’s about what the employee needs. When you give them

the resources to find what they need, it will have relevancy to them, and that gets them to engage. For many topics, ensuring access is confidential is another key advantage.

Q. People often don’t want to talk with their employers about personal difficulties. Does that get in the way of accessing services?

A. You really have to focus on the user experience and realize this is a potentially very sensitive thing. People may want a way to approach the subject anonymously. For instance, nearly every company has an Employee Assistance Program these days—but these are typically at about 10 percent utilization. Part of this is because people aren’t wanting to necessarily jump in first thing and talk to somebody. So you can offer some opportunities where they can kind of dip their toe in.

Education about mental health is by no means a replacement for the wonderful things that therapy, talking to somebody live, can do. But if the person isn’t comfortable doing that right away, you can give them something that will help.

Q. What about stigma around mental health? LifeSpeak has been around for more than 16 years—are you seeing that changing?

A. You have to be cognizant that people are still concerned about stigma, but I think it’s come a long way. One of our experts pointed out that about 50 percent of people will struggle with mental health once in the course of their lifetime. For the generations living through the pandemic, that number may jump.

I think that has created a collective experience... Folks have understood that COVID doesn’t just affect you physically. The struggles of frontline workers have been shown on television. Having celebrities speak openly has helped as well—we’re all talking about the Megan and Harry interview. The issue is being brought out of the shadows.

GAINING UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMA

Person-Centered Trauma-Informed Care helps in understanding behavior, supporting health, and preventing the cycle of retraumatization

By Sara Wildberger

According to a 2013 study in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 90 percent of adults in the United States have been exposed to at least one traumatic event in their lifetime: a natural disaster, a violent crime, a war experience, domestic violence, among many other incidents.

Multiple current studies (see pages 15-17) point to the current pandemic as a traumatic event likely to have long-term effects. In older adults, it can bring back feelings of past trauma as well.

“In all settings—a home, a community-based setting, a residential setting, wherever you are—an older person who walks through your doors probably has experienced trauma,” says Shelley Rood Wernick, MBA, managing director of the Center on Aging and Trauma, a project of the Holocaust Survivor Initiative at the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA).

“And they may exhibit behaviors due to the fact that they’re being triggered by a previous trauma—and you probably won’t know what that trauma is. So we want people to be prepared.”

Yet the effects of trauma on older adults and aging is little studied or researched. That’s where the Center on Aging and Trauma, and its Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care approach is helping.

Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care (PCTI) is defined as a “holistic approach to service delivery that promotes trust, dignity, strength, and empowerment of all individuals by incorporating knowledge about trauma into agency programs, policies, and procedures.”

In 2015, the Administration for Community Living/ Administration on Aging (ACL/AoA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded JFNA a grant to develop innovative person-centered trauma-informed care approaches for Holocaust survivors and their family caregivers.

In September 2020, ACL granted the Center \$5 million to expand its work. The Center has funded more than 200 projects across 21 states, including programs that teach caregivers about PCTI approaches.

A UNIVERSAL ISSUE

Authoring many of the materials are Shelley Rood Wernick, MBA, managing director, and Barbara Bedney, PhD, MSW, director of research and evaluation. They shared some basics for senior living leaders to think about as they increase their awareness of aging and trauma.

While many in senior living are familiar with and practice person-centered care, the “trauma-informed” part of the phrase and what it entails may be new.

As well as providing funding for person-centered trauma-informed programs, the Center provides technical assistance and training. Education programs and webinars have covered topics such as trauma and hoarding, trauma and home safety modifications, and trauma and food insecurity.

Under its expanded mandate, the Center is working with diverse groups including older Black Americans, older Native Americans, retired firefighters, and older refugees, to name a few.

Trauma exposure not only is associated with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, but it is also associated with physical health problems—and, of particular importance to senior living, with cognitive health.

A resident with trauma reactions may have behaviors or expressions of these that can be difficult for caregivers to understand. Learning more about trauma and having an approach can help bring down the stress level for all in a community.



Shelley Rood Wernick, MBA
Managing director
Center on Aging
and Trauma



Barbara Bedney, PhD, MSW
Director of research
and evaluation
Center on Aging
and Trauma

Wernick relates what happened when a group of home care aides visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., accompanied by caregivers. In a discussion, the caregiver staff began to relate their own experiences as refugees or facing violence and forced separation from families.

“The links were very easy to understand, once it was put out there in an accessible manner. The staff was able to relate a little more to their clients and to understand how some of their present behaviors and struggles are tied directly to their pasts.”

SAFETY AND CHOICES

Wernick and Bedney also recognize that the community as a whole, including staff of culinary and transportation, are part of residents’ lives and can be included in education. Trauma can affect any area of life, so staff who understand these reactions and behaviors can better help in the community.

“We seek to foster not only program delivery, but making sure the entire organization, from top to bottom, recognizes that a person-centered trauma-informed approach means to impact everyone involved,” Bedney says.

This means creating safe spaces for all—physically safe, but also safe peer-support networks and staff supervision that understands that staff also come with their own histories that may have made them vulnerable to trauma. Grantees have developed solutions including training staff on vicarious trauma.

The pandemic has brought its own retraumatizing elements to communities. As Bedney points out, “Imagine you’re a Holocaust survivor, and you had to isolate for your own safety. Now you’re being told to do it again. You can imagine that state of retraumatization...the hypervigilance, the anxiety, layered on top of the isolation.”

“We talk about what can be retraumatizing, and how we can help avoid some of these issues,” Bedney says. “That’s why the socialization programs are so important; they help alleviate some of that extra anxiety associated with that isolation, that fear of abandonment and loss of control. Many of these programs are offered online these days, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“We focus a lot on the triggers that come on as part of the normal aging process that can be retraumatizing for someone who has experienced trauma in the past,” says Wernick. “As people age, they may feel like they have less control over their own lives, less control over their own destinies, or where or how they live.

“That loss of control for someone who’s been in a traumatic situation in the past is reminiscent of a time earlier in their life where they did not have control of their own destiny.”

One key is to offer choices over what can be controlled, Wernick says. “We can give people choices, give people empowerment in how they want to access services—such as choosing when they want to eat or what activities they want to do.”

WHAT’S BEHIND BEHAVIORS

Caregivers can also be aware that in cognitive decline, vivid memories can surface—and these may be memories of trauma. “We hear stories of people who think they are back in the Holocaust, who are hiding, who are packing a suitcase, or need access to their sneakers in case they need to run,” Wernick says.

“So we provide a lot of training for family caregivers and for professional staff, who are helping to care for older adults who may be experiencing retraumatization from things they might see or hear on TV, or from things that are in their minds from a past that is very real to them now.”

“Part of our training is to help people understand how [behavior] can manifest in that kind of environment, where it can come up acutely. Moving a pair of sneakers from an older person’s view may unknowingly cause a real problem.”

Older adults can be mislabeled or misunderstood without an understanding that their behavior may be related to a previous traumatic experience.

“We need to resist thinking, ‘what’s wrong with you?’ and instead wonder, ‘what happened to you?’” Wernick says.

The Center encourages organizations to develop Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care committees or taskforces to look at how to make programs and projects work better for residents, families, and caregivers. Wernick and Bedney point out that these methods can be low-cost or no-cost, involving steps as simple as making sure people know they have choices—to leave an activity, to talk to a social worker, or to do a different activity, for instance.

Understanding trauma may become even more important in the wake of the pandemic. “How do we, as a community, as a society, as a world, get that sense of safety back?” Bedney asks. “What is it going to look like? We can use PCTI care to help answer these questions.”

For more information, visit agingandtrauma.org.

Studies, resources, tips, and expert input on mental well-being issues

A FREE AND AUTHORITATIVE ONLINE RESOURCE FOR WELL-BEING

The How Right Now (howrightnow.org) website is an evidence-based, culturally responsive campaign that helps address people's mental health and well-being challenges and supports individual and community resiliency.

To help people cope with pandemic stress, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention turned to the CDC Foundation, an independent nonprofit organization that extends the work of CDC through public-private partnerships. Through its fundraising for the COVID-19 response, the CDC Foundation was able to fund and carry out the campaign. Creating and updating the effort are the non-partisan and objective research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, as well as communications firms Burness and TMNcorp.

The site can help not only residents, but also caregivers, staff, and families. A Spanish-language version is at howrightnow.org/es/.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TO RISK MANAGEMENT

[“Why Invest in Behavioral Health in Times Like These?” Our Thinking blog, Mercer human resources consultants](#)

“Even before COVID-19 disrupted society as we knew it, behavioral health—the umbrella term commonly used for mental health and substance use disorders in the United States—was

emerging as a public health crisis...Although the cost directly associated with behavioral health diagnoses is relatively low (3-5% of total medical spend), there is a broader financial impact on employers each year...**U.S. employers lose millions of dollars in absenteeism and productivity each year, particularly due to unmitigated stress** and [unaddressed risky alcohol use](#).

“Now we’re seeing a bad situation get worse. A number of risk factors have emerged during the pandemic that could contribute to potential behavioral health concerns, including [issues](#) with work-life balance, isolation, lack of sleep, increased alcohol consumption, and financial stress...”

“With all this, you’d think that medical claims for behavioral health must be going through the roof. But it’s quite the contrary. Based on over one million members in Mercer’s database of claims information, from March to May of 2020 the number of individuals with newly diagnosed behavioral health claimants was down 25% from the same timeframe last year, with a 24% decrease in those newly diagnosed with mental health problems and 27% decrease in those newly diagnosed with substance use disorders. Additionally, many EAP vendors have reported dips in clinical utilization throughout their member populations.

“**Clearly, employees and their families are not getting the resources they need.** While the recent dip in utilization can be blamed on the difficulty of accessing care during a pandemic, even before the pandemic too many behavioral health issues were going untreated.”

How Right Now

Listen with Compassion

→ HowRightNow.org

Instead of...	Try...
Stop worrying so much.	I'm here for you.
The same thing happened to me.	I hear that.
It will all be fine.	This is difficult.
It is what it is.	I understand.
	I'm listening.

Source: howrightnow.org

PANDEMIC MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES COULD TAKE ECONOMIC TOLL

[“The COVID-19 Pandemic and the \\$16 Trillion Virus,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Oct. 12, 2020](#)

“Even individuals who do not develop COVID-19 are affected by the virus. Loss of life among friends and loved ones, fear of contracting the virus, concern about economic security, and the effects of isolation and loneliness have all taken a toll on the mental health of the population. **The proportion of US adults who report symptoms of depression or anxiety has averaged approximately 40% since April 2020;** the comparable figure in early 2019 was 11.0%. These data translate to an estimated 80 million additional individuals with these mental health conditions related to COVID-19. If, in line with prevailing estimates, the cost of these conditions is valued at about \$20,000 per person per year and the mental health symptoms last for only 1 year, the valuation of these losses could reach approximately \$1.6 trillion.”

“NO VACCINE” FOR COVID-19’S LONG-TERM HEALTH EFFECTS

[“The Long-Term Mental Health Effects of COVID-19,” *Psychiatric Annals*, Nov. 3, 2020](#)

“The novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) has affected the mental health of health care professionals and the general population. Most of the research has focused on the immediate and short-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a paucity of research available exploring the long-term mental health effects. Experience with previous disasters has shown that survivors suffer from various mental health problems including posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, phobias, fears with avoidant behaviors, and various neuropsychiatric disorders. There has been an increased incidence of substance use and internet addiction along with increased rates of domestic violence and child abuse. **Social distancing is helpful in limiting the spread of the disease, but the impact of social distancing and quarantine has resulted in increased anxiety among the general population.** The long-term mental health effects are anticipated to be intensified due to the pandemic affecting people worldwide. Mitigation strategies need to be implemented as there will be no vaccine available to limit the long-term mental health effects of this pandemic.”

HEALTH CARE WORKERS FACE ELEVATED RISKS

[“PTSD symptoms in healthcare workers facing the three coronavirus outbreaks: What can we expect after the COVID-19 pandemic,” *Psychiatry Research*, October 2020.](#)

“The Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the critical need to focus on its impact on the mental health of health care workers involved in the response to this emergency. It has been consistently shown that a high proportion of workers is at greater risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder and post-traumatic stress symptoms...Some variables were found to be of particular relevance as risk factors as well as resilience factors, including exposure level, working role, years of work experience, social and work support, job organization, quarantine, age, gender, marital status, and coping styles. **It will be critical to account for these factors when planning effective intervention strategies, to enhance the resilience and reduce the risk of adverse mental health outcomes among health care workers facing the current COVID-19 pandemic.**”

ALARMING OUTCOMES SEEN FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

[The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use, Kaiser Family Foundation, Feb. 10, 2021](#)

“Essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as health care providers, grocery store employees, and mail and package delivery personnel, have shown high rates of [poor mental health outcomes](#). These workers are generally required to work outside of their home and may be unable to practice social distancing. Consequently, they are at increased risk of contracting coronavirus and exposing other members of their household. A [KFF analysis](#) found that **essential workers face additional challenges, including difficulties affording basic necessities as a result of the pandemic.** These factors may contribute to poor mental health outcomes for these workers. Essential workers are more likely than nonessential workers to report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder (42% vs. 30%, respectively), starting or increasing substance use (25% vs. 11%), or considering suicide in the past 30 days (22% vs. 8%).”

CDC COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

[Healthcare Personnel and First Responders: How to Cope with Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Providing care to others during the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. How you cope with these emotions can affect your well-being, the care you give to others while doing your job, and the well-being of the people you care about outside of work. During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and cope with stress, and know where to go if you need help.

[Coping with Stress](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they can make us feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. **Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.**

[Grief and Loss](#)

Many people are experiencing grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grief is a normal response to loss during or after a disaster or other traumatic event. Grief can happen in response to loss of life, as well as to drastic changes to daily routines and ways of life that usually bring us comfort and a feeling of stability.

[Care For Yourself One Small Way Each Day](#)

Ideas and posters with simple, low- or no-cost ways to take care of yourself if experiencing pandemic stress.

DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS CAN REDUCE STIGMA

[“Digital Tools for Mental Health,” MarshMcLennan Insights report](#)

“Digital tools have the potential to reduce public prejudice and internalized stigma attached to mental ill health, which are major barriers to employees seeking support even when it is available. **Apps, websites, and message boards can educate vast numbers of people, counter negative stereotypes, reduce isolation and shame, and increase motivation to seek care.** For example, they can highlight the prevalence of mental ill health, the support and treatment options available, and the possibilities for recovery or long-term management to sustain productive, successful jobs and lives. Tools that let users communicate by text or chat can provide anonymity and remote access, reducing feelings of awkwardness or fears of being found out or penalized by peers or employers.”

SAFE, “SMART” WORKING CONDITIONS CAN HAVE PROTECTIVE EFFECTS

[“COVID-19-Related Mental Health Effects in the Workplace: A Narrative Review,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, November 2020](#)

“A relevant body of studies (number: 21) considered the impact of organizational factors on moderating or exacerbating the effect of COVID-19 on mental health. In particular, on the one hand, work related stress seems to exacerbate mental health issues, as well as poor social support and a prolonged working time. On the other hand, **the availability of secure procedure to manage the risk of contagion and the availability of personal protective equipment seems to moderate the risk of mental health concerns...**Reducing working time, enhancing smart working, promoting secure protocols, trainings, and improving job/leadership support seems to be related to better performance and well-being. Above all, security and safety equipment seem to be highly and positive related to workers well-being and performance.”

Promoting Employee Wellness Starts With HR Leadership

With the onset of COVID-19, the lives of senior care employees became more challenging than ever before. In fact, OnShift's Workforce 360 research, a survey of more than 2,100 post-acute healthcare and senior living industry professionals, revealed just how difficult life is for employees. 80% of respondents indicated that burnout is the top personal challenge facing their employees, followed by fear and safety concerns due to COVID-19.ⁱ

To address the challenges brought on by the pandemic, many providers have turned to technology to improve the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of their caregivers and frontline workers. While technology alone is not a panacea, it is proving to make a major difference in their lives.

“During a time of increased anxiety and stress, providers have doubled-down on promoting employees’ health and mental wellness. Now is the time to give your employees the tools and resources they need to manage through challenging times.”

– Mark Woodka, CEO of OnShift

Promote Financial Wellness

63% of Americans have been living paycheck to paycheck since COVID-19 hit.ⁱⁱ With financial wellness software, employees can access their earned but unpaid wages in real time. In 2020, OnShift had nearly \$50 million in funds accessed before payday, indicating how real the struggle is for employees. In fact, 90% of employees intended to spend those funds on bills, groceries, rent and unexpected expenses.ⁱⁱⁱ



63% of Americans have been living paycheck to paycheck since COVID-19 hit.ⁱⁱ

Measure Satisfaction & Collect Feedback

Sometimes the easiest problems to fix are the ones managers don't know about. Quick and easy pulse surveys can help you better understand how employees are feeling and what can be done to help. This is especially true for new hires, who are at a high risk of leaving within the first 90 days.

Keep Employees Informed

2020 has shown just how quickly things can change. With new policies, safety guidelines and other updates, it's crucial to keep employees informed in a timely manner. A robust messaging system can quickly and easily broadcast text messages to staff, keeping everyone informed and in the loop.

Celebrate & Reward Employees

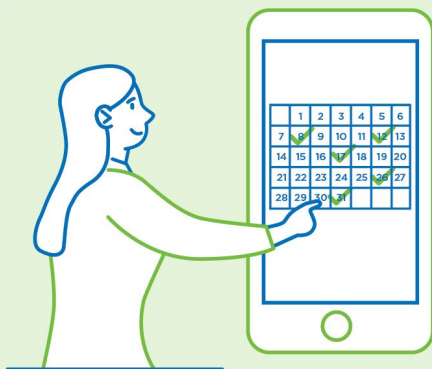
With all of the demands related to COVID-19, it can be hard to remember to thank employees for their contributions. Employee engagement technology can help you easily track who's doing well and systematically award points for key behaviors, like consistent attendance. Managers are prompted to recognize employees for their contributions and employees can trade in points for rewards.

Provide Peace Of Mind When Coming To Work

Providers are looking to put every extra measure in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. A contactless time & attendance solution that allows employees to clock-in/out on their phones can do just that. This, along with pre-screening questions to identify common symptoms of COVID-19 at clock-in, adds an additional layer of protection against infection.

Support Work-Life Balance with Flexible Schedules

With increased childcare and family needs due to the challenges of the pandemic, staff are requiring new levels of flexibility. The best way to address dynamic needs is with a staff scheduling solution that includes a modern and user-friendly mobile app for employees. Prioritize a solution that allows employees to quickly request and swap shifts, offers automated approvals where appropriate and makes it easy for managers to fill call-offs and open shifts.



Redefine The Employee Experience

With OnShift Software

OnShift is committed to helping healthcare providers redefine the employee experience. It's the sole focus of every member of the OnShift team.

We work hand in hand with senior living providers to drive profound efficiencies, minimize costs and provide a differentiated experience that empowers their employees. The listed examples were just a few ways providers are utilizing OnShift to provide greater care, transparency and communication to their employees.

Next-Generation Human Capital Management Software

OnShift's innovative approach to recruitment, hiring, workforce management and engagement fosters a culture where people want to work. That's why thousands of senior care organizations rely on OnShift's integrated suite of software and services to dramatically reduce turnover rates, decrease costs and improve the quality and continuity of care.

**INTRODUCING
ONSHIFT TIME**
New: Modern,
Mobile, Contactless
Time & Attendance



¹Workforce 360: Employee Burnout, Fear & Safety Concerns Impact Recruitment & Retention In Senior Care, 2020.

²63% of Americans have been living paycheck to paycheck since COVID hit, CNBC, 2020.

³Data collected from OnShift Wallet software, OnShift, 2020.





Redefine The Employee Experience With OnShift Software

33%
REDUCTION IN
TURNOVER

35%
REDUCTION IN
TIME TO HIRE

46%
REDUCTION IN
OVERTIME

\$300k
REDUCTION IN
LABOR COSTS

Next-Generation Human Capital Management
Software Purpose-Built for Senior Care

Recruit • Hire • Manage • Engage • Retain

NEW: MODERN, MOBILE, CONTACTLESS TIME & ATTENDANCE



2021 CORPORATE PARTNER
PREMIER MEMBER



*The improvements referenced above are based on OnShift customer case studies



STATE OF THE SENIOR LIVING WORKFORCE

Jobs, Hours, and Wages
2020 Q4

Sponsored by:

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SENIOR LIVING LOSES 77,000 JOBS DURING PANDEMIC

Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak in March 2020, senior living industry employment has trended steadily lower. Starting in March, employment in the senior living industry declined in nine of the next 11 months, with total losses in excess of 77,000 jobs.

This represented a decline of 7.9 percent, dropping industry employment back to its September 2016 level.

Job losses were much more significant in the overall private sector. In March and April alone, the nation's private sector cut 21.4 million jobs, or 16.5 percent of the total employment base. This wiped out nearly 10 years of job growth, dropping the number of employed people back to its November 2010 level.

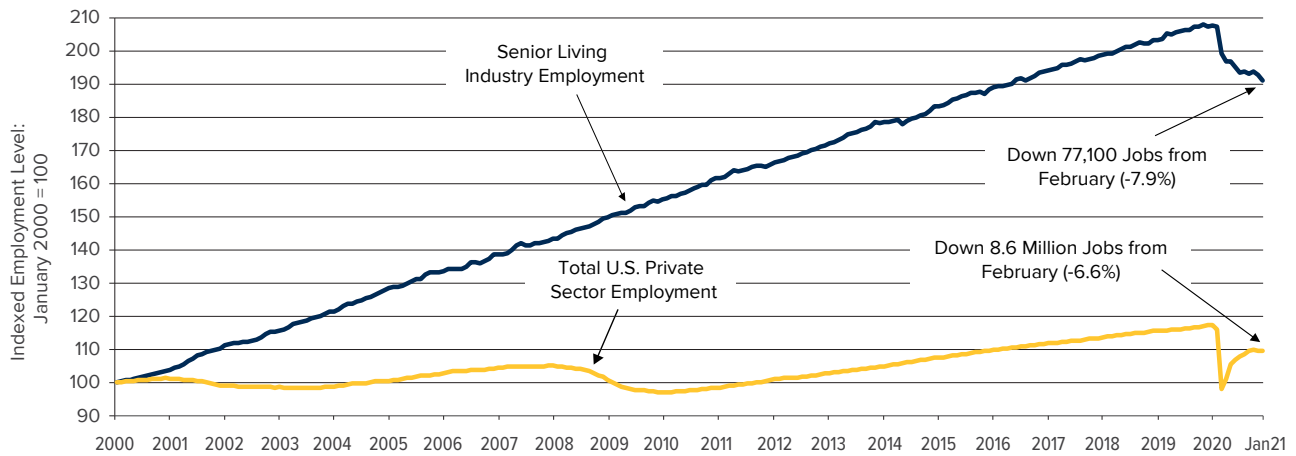
But the private sector started adding back lost jobs in May, reaching a net 12.8 million jobs, between April 2020 and

January 2021. Despite the strong growth, private sector employment remained 8.6 million jobs below its pre-coronavirus peak.

Related industries were also significantly impacted. Restaurants and accommodations as well as retail industries suffered significant job losses in March and April, before resuming job growth during the following nine months. As of January 2021, the restaurants and accommodations sector was still down 3.1 million jobs (21.3 percent) from February 2020, while the retail sector was down 383,000 jobs (-2.5 percent) from February.

Related health care industries also experienced a negative employment impact. Skilled nursing (-171,000 jobs and -10.8 percent), hospitals (-68,000 jobs and -1.3 percent), and home health care (-51,000 jobs and -3.3 percent) are all down from their February 2020 employment levels.

Senior Living Industry Jobs Drop Back to 2016 Levels
January 2000 to January 2021: Senior Living Industry vs. Total U.S. Private Sector



Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are seasonally adjusted

ABOUT ONSHIFT

OnShift's next-generation human capital management platform fundamentally transforms the relationship between healthcare organizations and their employees. Our innovative approach to recruitment, hiring, workforce management and engagement fosters a culture where people want to work. That's why thousands of healthcare organizations rely on OnShift's integrated suite of software and services to dramatically reduce turnover rates, decrease costs and improve the quality and continuity of care.

ARGENTUM AND ONSHIFT PARTNERSHIP

The Argentum and OnShift partnership began in 2016 to advance the development of data-driven research, innovative resources, and best practices to give senior living providers new tools and insights to improve workforce strategies. This report is a result of that relationship.

JOB LOSS PACE SLOWS, BUT ADDS UP TO FOUR CONSECUTIVE QUARTERS

Employment in the senior living industry declined in the fourth quarter, albeit at a somewhat slower pace than the previous two quarters. Senior living payrolls shrunk by a net 4,800 jobs in the fourth quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, according to preliminary figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). This followed net declines of 45,700 jobs in the second quarter and 16,300 jobs in the third quarter.

The four consecutive quarterly losses resulted in a 6.9 percent decline in senior living industry jobs between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020. This was slightly more than the 6.0 percent drop in total private sector employment during the same four-quarter period.

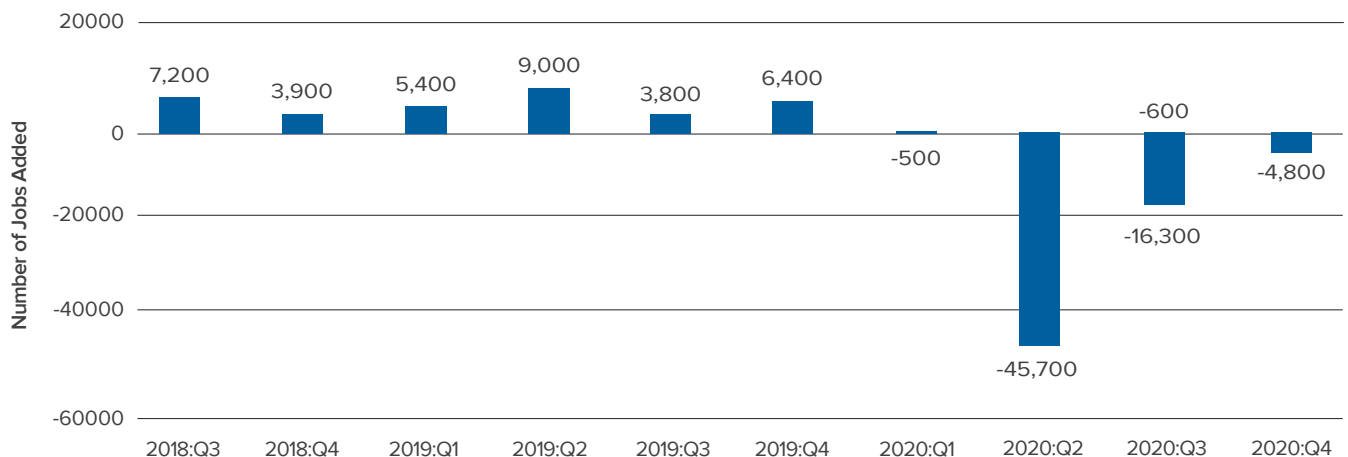
Within the senior living industry, continuing care retirement communities saw the largest job losses in recent quarters, falling 8.1 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020. In comparison, employment at assisted living communities declined 5.7 percent during the last four quarters.

Employment Trends: Industry Whole, Types of Communities, Total U.S. Private Sector

Sector	Average Weekly Hours: 2020: Q4	2019: Q4 to 2020: Q4	2018 to 2019	2017 to 2018
Senior Living Industry	911,100	-6.9%	2.4%	2.4%
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	472,600	-8.1%	2.0%	1.6%
Assisted Living Communities	438,500	-5.7%	2.9%	3.2%
Total U.S. Private Sector	121.9 million	-6.0%	1.5%	1.8%

Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Senior Living Industry Employment Change from the Previous Quarter



Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted.

EMPLOYMENT REMAINS DAMPENED ACROSS RELATED INDUSTRIES

Although employment in most related industries continued to recover from the pandemic lows registered in the second quarter, staffing levels remained well below pre-coronavirus levels. In the restaurants and accommodations sector, employment plunged 18.2 percent, or nearly 2.6 million jobs, between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

Skilled nursing employment in the fourth quarter stood 9.3 percent, or nearly 150,000 jobs, below its fourth quarter 2019 level—a continuation of a longer-term trend, as 2020 represented the ninth consecutive year of job losses in skilled nursing.

The pandemic also exacerbated job losses in the retail sector. Retailers cut payrolls by 2.8 percent, or nearly 450,000 jobs, between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020, representing the third consecutive year of job losses in retail.

Although employment in the home health care sector continued to recover from pandemic lows, it remained below pre-coronavirus levels. Overall, the number of jobs in the home health care industry declined 1.9 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

Among the five related industries, hospitals registered the fewest pandemic-related job losses in percentage terms, declining 1.4 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

Employment Trends Across Related Industries

	Number of Jobs: Q4 2020	Q4 2019 to Q4 2020	2018 to 2019	2017 to 2018
Senior Living Industry	911,100	-6.9%	2.4%	2.4%
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	472,600	-8.1%	2.0%	1.6%
Assisted Living Communities	438,500	-5.7%	2.9%	3.2%
Skilled Nursing	1,445,300	-9.3%	-0.7%	-1.2%
Hospitals	5,155,900	-1.4%	1.2%	1.1%
Home Health Care	1,512,100	-1.9%	3.5%	3.3%
Retail Trade	15,458,000	-2.8%	-1.1%	-0.4%
Restaurants and Accommodations	11,608,500	-18.2%	1.7%	1.4%
Total U.S. Private Sector	121.9 million	-6.0%	1.5%	1.8%

Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted.

AVERAGE WORKWEEK CONTINUES WELL ABOVE PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

Although senior living industry employment continues to trend lower, the average number of hours worked by employees remains well above pre-pandemic levels. This indicates that jobs lost in senior living were more likely part-time positions.

Senior living employees worked an average of 33.7 hours per week during the fourth quarter of 2020, up 2.8 percent from an average workweek of 32.8 hours during the fourth quarter of 2019. In comparison, the average workweek in the overall private sector increased 1.5 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

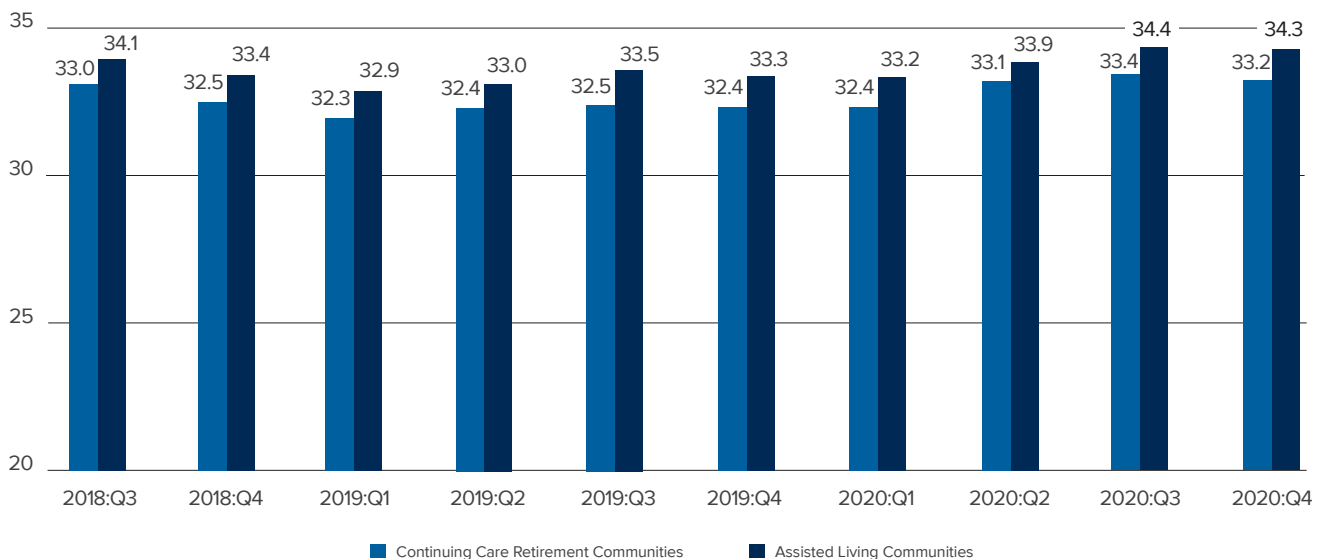
Within the senior living industry, the average employee workweek increased sharply. Employees at assisted living communities worked an average of 34.3 hours per week during the fourth quarter of 2020, which was up 2.9 percent from their average workweek of 33.3 hours during the fourth quarter of 2019. Employees at continuing care retirement communities worked an average of 33.2 hours during the fourth quarter of 2020, up 2.6 percent from an average workweek of 32.4 hours during the fourth quarter of 2019.

Trends in Average Weekly Hours

Sector	Average Weekly Hours: 2020: Q4	2019: Q4 to 2020: Q4	2018 to 2019	2017 to 2018
Senior Living Industry	33.7	2.8%	-1.2%	0.0%
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	33.2	2.6%	-0.9%	-0.6%
Assisted Living Communities	34.3	2.9%	-0.6%	0.0%
Total U.S. Private Sector	34.9	1.5%	-0.3%	0.3%

Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted

Quarterly Averages of Weekly Hours of Senior Living Industry Employees



Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted.

RIISING AVERAGE WAGES TREND CONTINUES FOR SENIOR LIVING EMPLOYEES

Average hourly earnings of senior living employees continued to rise sharply in the fourth quarter, even as overall employment levels trended lower. This implies that the jobs being cut are more likely to be lower-wage positions at senior living communities.

Average hourly earnings of senior living employees jumped 6.2 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020, the largest four-quarter increase on record.

In comparison, the average hourly earnings of all private sector employees increased 4.8 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

Within the senior living industry, wage growth was strongest at assisted living communities in the fourth quarter. Average hourly earnings of employees at assisted living communities increased 6.9 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020, representing the ninth consecutive quarter with growth above 4 percent.

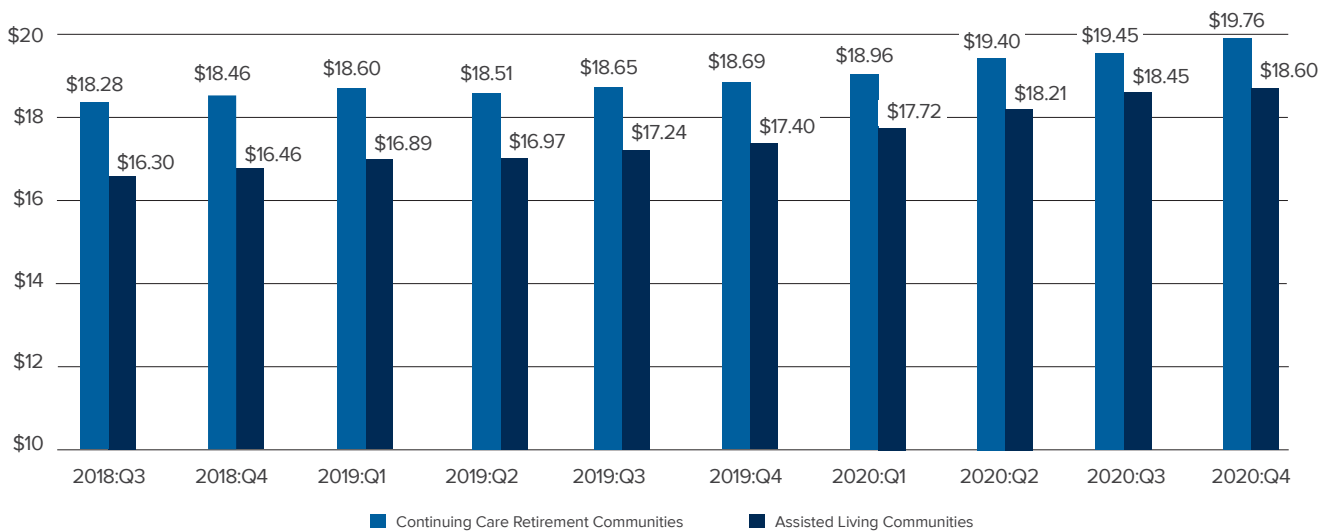
Average hourly earnings of employees at continuing care retirement communities increased 5.7 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020. This represented the sector's strongest four-quarter wage growth on record.

Trends in Average Hourly Earnings

Sector	Average Hourly Earnings: 2020: Q4	2019: Q4 to 2020: Q4	2018 to 2019	2017 to 2018
Senior Living Industry	\$19.19	6.2%	3.3%	3.5%
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	\$19.76	5.7%	1.7%	3.5%
Assisted Living Communities	\$18.60	6.9%	5.3%	3.6%
Total U.S. Private Sector	\$29.68	4.8%	3.2%	3.0%

Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted

Quarterly Averages of Hourly Earnings of Senior Living Industry Employees



Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted

IN RELATED INDUSTRIES, SKILLED NURSING REGISTERS STRONGEST WAGE GAINS

Wage gains of employees in the related industries were mixed in the fourth quarter. The strongest growth was registered by skilled nursing employees, who saw their average hourly earnings jump 7.9 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020. That represented the sector's strongest four-quarter wage growth on record.

Average hourly earnings of employees in the home health care sector increased 6.4 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020, which matched the gains posted in the second and third quarters.

Retail employees saw their average hourly earnings rise 6.0 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020—the third consecutive quarter with growth of at least 6 percent.

The average hourly earnings of hospital employees rose 3.7 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020.

Wage growth of employees in the hospitality sector slowed in the fourth quarter. The average hourly earnings of employees in the restaurants and accommodations sector rose just 1.6 percent between the fourth quarters of 2019 and 2020, well below the 4.5 percent increase posted in the second quarter.

Trends in Average Hourly Earnings Across Related Industries

	Average Hourly Earnings Q4 2020	Q4 2019 to Q4 2020	2018 to 2019	2017 to 2018
Senior Living Industry	\$19.19	6.2%	3.3%	3.5%
Continuing Care Retirement Communities	\$19.76	5.7%	1.7%	3.5%
Assisted Living Communities	\$18.60	6.9%	5.3%	3.6%
Skilled Nursing	\$21.70	7.9%	3.8%	2.2%
Hospitals	\$35.30	3.7%	2.7%	2.4%
Home Health Care	\$21.90	6.4%	3.7%	0.5%
Retail Trade	\$21.05	6.0%	4.8%	3.4%
Restaurants and Accommodations	\$16.10	1.6%	3.7%	3.6%
Total U.S. Private Sector	\$29.68	4.8%	3.2%	3.0%

Source: Argentum analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures are not seasonally adjusted

