

## There is a tie-in between staff turnover and care

Di Findley, West Des Moines, Letter to the Editor 11:16 p.m. CDT September 9, 2014



(Photo: The Register)

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The Des Moines Register's What Others Are Saying (Aug 27) referenced the Cedar Rapids Gazette article "Keeping Caregivers." The story shed light on the important issue of staff turnover in nursing homes, as released in a report by the Iowa Department of Human Services.

Data and statistics can be sliced in various ways. It's important that consumers, employers, elected officials and others consider the variations. In the past, nursing homes reported to the DHS a "total turnover rate" for all staff. The turnover of certified nursing assistants (CNAs), licensed nurses, maintenance and dietary staff, social workers and all other staff were lumped together and reported. That is an important distinction, because CNAs provide most of the direct hands-on care in nursing homes, assisting with eating, dressing, bathing, walking, toileting, oral care and other personal hygiene, and more.

The annual turnover rate of CNAs is typically higher than other worker classifications. In those instances, the impact on the quality of care is far greater. As pointed out by the Gazette, the state is doing very little analysis on the data it is collecting. A preliminary correlation analysis linking high CNA turnover to nursing home deficiencies was done by PHI National for Iowa CareGivers a couple of years ago. The "correlation between turnover and quality outcomes was statistically significant," justifying the need for more detailed and ongoing analysis.

The departments of Public Health, Inspections and Appeals, Health and Human Services, Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman, researchers, the Iowa attorney general's office, workers, consumers, employers, advocates and others must make this a priority. The data only has meaning if we learn from it and use it to make life better for older Iowans, their caregivers and you.

— Di Findley, West Des Moines

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