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The top 10 ways to overcome healthcare professional burnout

A quick guide to help you keep your best team members

Introduction

The healthcare workforce has begun to stabilize, but burnout among nurses remains widespread. In a survey of 800,000 nurses, 138,000 left the workforce between 2022 and 2024. Further, 40% are planning to leave by 2029, naming stress and burnout as two major causative factors ([NSBCN](#)).

Here are 10 techniques you can start implementing today to reduce burnout and support your team's well-being.

1. Enable your team to deliver excellent care, without the stress

One common cause of healthcare professional burnout is not having enough coverage to accommodate patient needs ([AONL](#)).

At best, inadequate coverage can leave your team feeling like they can't deliver adequate care. At worst, it negatively affects patients. Either way, it can lead to more burnout. And burnout leads to turnover.

Breaking that cycle is crucial.

Start by evaluating your facility's workforce strategy, noting its strengths and weaknesses. For example, grade your recruitment and retention budgets and processes; analyze nurse turnover numbers and patterns; determine your baseline workforce numbers; and determine your team's efficacy in resolving coverage gaps.

Once you have the answers, make steady improvements in all areas. Don't forget to communicate your efforts so your team knows you're actively working to correct any shortcomings.



40%

Forty percent of nurses plan to leave the workforce by 2029 because of stress and burnout

2. Invest in your clinical management team

Half of all nurse managers are at a high risk of turnover, and when they leave, they take RNs with them — at a rate of 2% to 4% above baseline.

At first glance, the annual nurse manager turnover rate appears to be on the low end: 7.5%. But, in the first 3.5 years of management, it balloons to that of RNs, about 17%. Half of nurse managers fall into this category ([AONL](#)).

Investing in leadership development for newer nurse managers can help you retain more of them.

Listen to their day-to-day challenges and be available to help them problem-solve. Pair a healthy, “psychologically safe” working environment with supportive strategies like flexible scheduling and technology that lightens their administrative load.

What is ‘psychological safety’?

“A shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking — and models the effects of team psychological safety and team efficacy together on learning and performance in organizational work teams.”

[Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams](#)
Amy Edmondson

3. Enhance orientation and training programs

Get newly onboarded nurses excited about joining your team with a clear roadmap, career ladders and mentorship programs.

Pairing new team members with leadership can give them a vested interest in their own success and a clear understanding of your facility’s culture.

Learning opportunities are important to all generations, but Gen Z expects organizations to foster their professional development ([ShiftKey](#)). Regardless of generation or tenure, help your team members envision what their future looks like in your facility.

Investing in your team’s professional development makes it clear that you’re committed to helping them realize their goals.

4. Schedule strategically

Reducing burnout through scheduling is possible when you keep your team’s lives in mind.

Start by understanding what kind of flexibility your people want. For example, if a top nurse wants Tuesday afternoons off to watch her kid’s ballet practice, consider how a shortened shift could make that happen. The nurse wins, her family wins and you win because you keep her engaged and committed.

Inject as much choice and flexibility into schedules as you possibly can. That might mean offering shorter blocks, rotating days in creative ways, or empowering nurses to shape parts of their own calendars.

Today’s healthcare professionals value choice and flexibility above many traditional incentives. In a 2025 workforce survey, 78% of nurses said flexibility was a top factor in their job decisions (ranking ahead of compensation), and 67% linked burnout and dissatisfaction to a lack of flexibility ([Business Wire](#)).

Our [research shows](#) that 97% of healthcare professionals agree that their peers need more schedule flexibility. More choice is tied to measurable productivity and well-being improvements, too: 72% of professionals say they would stay longer with more control over their hours, and 65% of those with flexible hours report better health. ([Worldmetrics](#)).

When burnout starts to spike, clinician time off is a must. Plan ahead for team-member leave, and bring in independent professionals when needed so everyone gets to recharge.



Ninety-seven percent of nurses say their jobs have required personal sacrifices, such as missing weddings and funerals

5. Support your teams’ mental health

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of mental well-being in which every individual realizes their abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community” ([WHO](#)).

Yet, more than half of healthcare workers report frequent burnout, and many nurses experience high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion that can affect their well-being and performance ([McKinsey](#)).



More than 39% of employees say they want more mental health and wellness support

Research shows that targeted mental health interventions can significantly reduce burnout, stress, anxiety and depression among healthcare professionals. Programs such as mindfulness training, resilience workshops and structured peer or professional support are linked with measurable improvements in emotional well-being ([CDC](#)).

Start by avoiding stigmas around mental health and actively sharing resources with your team. The “Impact Wellbeing” campaign by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ([NIOSH](#)) contains guidance specifically for healthcare-professional burnout prevention and management.

Clinicians benefit when they can engage with evidence-based therapy rather than relying solely on informal coping strategies. Professional help is one of the most effective mental health supports, so consider providing your team with access to licensed mental health professionals, including counselors, psychologists or therapists.

Embedding mental health resources into organizational culture, alongside reducing stigma around seeking help, improves team engagement ([CDC](#)).



62%

Sixty-two percent of nurses say they're burned out right now

6. Listen to your team

Despite dealing with burnout, the majority (79%) of healthcare professionals wouldn't trade their careers for another. Yet, a whopping 95% feel like people don't understand the challenges of their work ([ShiftKey](#)).

It may sound overly simple, but listening goes a long way in improving mental wellness and directly addresses a burnout major symptom: emotional exhaustion ([Frontiers](#)).

A former nursing home administrator who now works on our team exemplified how listening can strengthen team cohesion in a story of one of her best (chronically late) nurses.

During a candid discussion, this administrator uncovered the reason for the nurse's tardiness: She had a childcare issue. A simple scheduling adjustment enabled the administrator to ensure quality care for her patients while empowering her nurse to meet her personal caregiving responsibilities.

You don't need to wait for a moment of tension to find out what your team is struggling with or work together to find solutions to issues in your facility.

Provide ways for team members to tell you how they're doing. But also set up a true feedback loop where you receive their grievances, respond to them, and make changes that improve their experience.

Leveraging the right tools and technology, such as [engagement platforms](#), can help open easy lines of communication with your team.

7. Provide perks people actually want

Significant discrepancies exist between what employees say they want and what leaders are offering.

Our "[2025 Senior Care Survey Report: Workforce 360](#)," an analysis of responses from nearly 1,000 senior care leaders, over 2,000 employees and more than 1,500 independent professionals, revealed that higher pay is still the No. 1 perk for 70% of employees. It's also the most-often-tried organizational strategy.

Retention bonuses and incentives were No. 2 for 59% of employees, but only 25% of leaders are providing them. Additional employee perks (like local discounts and earned wage access) ranked No. 3 for 51% of employees, but only 21% of leaders offer them.

Perhaps most relevant to the issue of burnout is a desire for more mental health and wellness support. Over 39% of employees (39%) want more of it, but only 28% of leaders count it among their retention strategies.

These discrepancies underscore the need for listening programs that help you tailor perks to your team members' needs. Effective listening programs save you from investing in services that don't reduce turnover or move the needle on burnout.

8. Apply for workforce grants

Workforce grants exist to provide financial support for organizations investing in burnout prevention, professional development and more.

For example, federal funding through the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) supports a wide range of workforce strengthening activities ([HSRA](#)). Its workforce program also assists facilities in establishing, improving or expanding evidence-based mental and behavioral health programs for their workforces ([HSRA](#)).

There are also private funding opportunities, like The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation's \$51 million Nursing Initiative, which supports workforce sustainability in New York ([Guthrie](#)).

In addition to federal and foundation grants, many states offer workforce development and mental-health program funding.

To get a sense of what your facility is eligible to receive, visit [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). To keep abreast of state funding opportunities, regularly review your state's health department website and grant portals. Consider also subscribing to alert services, and building partnerships with educational institutions and community groups to maximize eligibility.

9. Find a reliable partner for filling shifts on demand

When it comes to filling gaps in your schedule, you need a partner that helps your team deliver consistent, quality care on your terms.

Juggling all the demands of a traditional agency (or worse, multiple agencies and apps) can be really draining on your schedulers and clinical team. It can also get expensive.

Minimize all the back-and-forth calls, emails and messages by finding one platform that can meet most of your needs.

Look for technology that provides time-saving automation features while keeping your administrators and schedulers in the driver's seat. Prioritizing apps that reduce schedulers' workloads and enable your team to build a network of reliable, local professionals can help reduce the day-to-day stress inherent in healthcare.



\$72K

10. Use on-demand shifts as a relief valve

Leveraging on-demand shifts isn't a workforce failure for your facility — far from it.

On-demand shifts provide relief to your valuable team members when they need it most, which helps alleviate their stress. They also support your leadership team.

Advancing a thoughtful workforce strategy that reduces burnout takes time. If leaders are focused on finding last-minute coverage, they can't focus on advancing your long-term vision. On-demand shifts create time and space for everyone, while ensuring your patients get the care they deserve.

Sources and resources

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About ShiftKey

ShiftKey is a technology company committed to transforming access and integrity in the workforce. By leveraging data and a marketplace approach to connect independent licensed professionals with facilities with open workforce needs, ShiftKey is playing a vital role in advancing empowered work, stability and solutions for professionals, facilities and the people they serve. With 10,000 healthcare facilities and hundreds of thousands of independent licensed professionals on the platform, ShiftKey is the market leader in strategic workforce solutions, driving a more sustainable, inclusive and profitable workforce economy for the future.

For more information, visit www.ShiftKey.com.

About OnShift

OnShift, a ShiftKey brand, delivers next-generation workforce management with modern, world-class scheduling software. Our innovative approach to workforce solutions fosters a culture where people want to work. Post-acute care facilities rely on OnShift's software and services to reduce turnover rates, decrease costs and improve the quality of care.

For more information, visit www.OnShift.com.

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