

RESUME

Career Objectives:

Looking for challenges
constantly upgrading

What's Next for New NHAs? A Guide for Recent NHA Graduates

Congratulations! You've Done it!

You've spent up to 120 hours in a classroom learning about being a Nursing Home Administrator (NHA). Then, you spent many additional months working in each department of a nursing home community gathering vital intel in anticipation of the licensing exam. Perhaps you've even taken a test prep class to prepare you for the licensing exam. Now that all of that is behind you, and you are a licensed NHA, what's next?

Being a licensed NHA is unlike any other professionally licensed position. Being an NHA means that not only are you responsible for the care and well-being of many residents, but you are also responsible for a wide variety of staff with varying knowledge levels, educations, and backgrounds. It also means that you now need to be the interpreter of pages and pages of regulations not only from a federal level, but also at the individual state level. With all that said, you are now beginning a journey to what will be the most rewarding position of your career.



The Importance of a Mentor

As with most professional positions, one thing that can help you begin this journey is a good mentor. Working alongside someone that has successfully done the work of an NHA, has had successful surveys, manages customer and employee satisfaction well, and knows how to interpret regulations is extremely valuable in this industry. In seeking out a mentor, look for these qualities to assure a good match to your mentor.

Considerations When Choosing a Mentor

Take an introspective look at your values. What is important to you in your career advancement? Make sure that your selected mentor aligns with your values and goals.



Good communication between you and your mentor is extremely important. If you are not able to effectively debrief regarding a project or event that you have taken on, then growth with that mentor may be stifled.

Your mentor must be willing and patient with you as you grow your knowledge and understanding of the senior living business. Also, ask that individual if they have mentored others in the past. If so, seek out those previously mentored individuals for their feedback.



Personality and expectations of your mentor are key components as well. Ask yourself, "Am I looking for someone who is outgoing or someone who is more introverted?" Only you can make that determination. Also, make your expectations known before connecting with a mentor. Let that individual know how much time you are looking for them to spend with you and if that time spent would be during work hours or outside of work hours and the work environment.

A mentor need not be part of your organization. A good mentor can be someone who is connected to the community in other ways. Perhaps they are a member of a local professional organization, or they are active with an association representing senior living. These affiliations are something to consider as you build your professional career.



Planning for Career Growth

In your goal to grow in your profession, you need to be patient as you increase the knowledge you will need to succeed. Your patience in starting small will benefit you down the road. Look for the beginning of your career to start as an Assistant NHA position or perhaps begin in an Assisted Living setting. As an Assistant NHA, you could start by having oversight over a few departments or special areas. In Assisted Living, the ability to grow would be at a different pace and a different population than in skilled nursing care. Once success has been obtained on a smaller scale, ask for additional duties to move your career forward by taking on more responsibilities.

Since there is a strong Human Resources (HR) component of an NHA position, be familiar with HR laws and the HR policies of your own organization. Here are a few key HR areas you will need to be familiar with as you begin and advance your career as an NHA.



Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA)

Make sure you understand the legal implications of discrimination, especially for those people over the age of 40. Be aware when placing job ads not to identify the applicant pool as needing to be “young and energetic people” or make age-related jokes or comments to employees in or out of the workplace.



National Labor Relations Act (NLRA)

This law protects the rights of employees to talk about their working conditions. From a manager standpoint, you must be aware that prohibiting or punishing employees for talking about their salaries or complaining about scheduling is illegal. Utilize your organization's legal counsel to assist with any questions you may have about the NLRA.



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA and ADAA)

This act protects more employees than you realize. Disabilities may not be obvious such as chronic migraines, or a hearing disability. Be familiar with what is required by employers related to ADA and ADAA.



Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

FMLA is much more than affording employees leave after having a baby or adopting one. Know the ins and outs of FMLA so as not to make a mistake with someone that reports to you.

While you don't need to be an expert in employment law as an NHA, you do need to know the basics as well as where and when to seek help to answer questions.

Conclusion

The basis of what you do as an NHA rests on how you treat those who work within your organization. As a leader, you need to work with employees to identify ways they can advance themselves in the organization and be a leader and mentor to others. Building a strong team starts by knowing what motivates others on your team and how to recognize and reward them. It also means holding people accountable to their position, even when it's difficult to do so. These qualities begin to establish you as that individual that may one day be a mentor to another new NHA.

Would you like to explore your career options further?

LW Consulting, Inc. can help. Visit our website and reach out to one of our career and placement professionals.

www.lw-consult.com

