

Burned Out.

Chronic workplace stress and turn-overs in the adult care community threaten to create a crisis of epic proportions. Here's how we're solving this dilemma.



SAMPLE

Introduction

Recent events coupled with years of difficult working conditions and non-sustainable compensation structures have conspired to create a crisis in the adult care community. Add to that the aging of the largest single generation in the history of the United States, the "baby boomers", and we're heading into an *Andrea Gail* type Perfect Storm.

The Problem(s)

It's an understatement to say that the adult care community is facing some challenges. In fact, the issues are nearly at epic crisis levels. The operating infrastructure is fragile and could collapse at any time. Let's look at just a few of the contributors to this impending Perfect Storm.

Demand.

In a word, rising. How about exploding? Consider that the largest generation in the history of the United States, the so-called "Baby Boomers" are fast approaching the time when they will need caregivers. Many, if not most, cannot rely on their children for support as these offspring are experiencing their own challenges.



Michelle was facing one of the hardest decisions of her life. After having been the primary caregiver for her father, Andre, in her own home for seven years, Andre's mobility declined to the point where he could no longer negotiate the stairs of Michelle's multi-storey split-level house. In fact, it became so treacherous that one day while alone his legs just gave out on the stairs and she found him lying at the bottom, conscious but immobile for hours.

Clearly, this was an untenable situation. Neither Michelle nor her husband could alter their schedules enough to provide full coverage for Andre. They got him an emergency-call pendant that he could use to summon help, but even though he remained sharp as a tack, if something happened that rendered him unconscious, he would not be able to call for assistance. Both Michelle and her husband were sickened by the thought of placing Andre in a nursing home.

Investigation revealed that Adult Family Homes were so full that it could be months or even years before a spot opened up. And, of course, the smaller homes with good caregiver-to-resident ratios were all but impossible to even get on a waiting list.

Caregiver Abuse.

It's a strong word, and many caregivers experience abuse of some sort; whether that's workload, long hours with no breaks, an inflexible employer, or the never-ending stress of insufficient pay. There are also abuses doled out by patients, especially those with degenerative brain disorders. These stresses add up to yield a care staff that is operating at far less than optimal efficiency. Mistakes are made, attrition rates accelerate, and the people in need of care are just not getting it. It's a vicious cycle.



I had to quit working for 6 years because all working and caregiving was just burning me out. Since we were receiving housing assistance (Sec 8) and SSI, any money I made went to those programs. It just didn't make sense for me to keep working. My husband and I have been separated over a year, and are now in the process of getting a divorce, I was forced out of our house, had to move in with my parents, and have been working a part time job training program for the last year. I am doing what I can to find a full time job so I can be on my own... caregiving is hard enough on its own... but the additional financial burdens... especially those 'helped' by outdated gov't programs, can be enough to break the caregiver camel's back- it's just one of many things that broke mine, and caused my burnt out and for our marriage to fail. But the gov't doesn't care about that- they just care about saving pennies now, so they can spend \$\$ on Nursing Homes in 5 years. Something needs to change.
