

How to Manage Burnout & Ensure Quality Care

Leading Your Workforce Through COVID-19 and Beyond



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A Message from the CEO

It's no secret that 2020 has been a challenging year for us all. COVID-19 has transformed our day-to-day and challenged workers across industries, but perhaps no category has faced greater pressure, stress and strain than our healthcare system. From the care providers on the frontlines, to the administrators and hospital staff working hard to keep things running, everyone in the industry has been impacted. As a result, healthcare workforce burnout has become a significant concern as industry leaders look to our future.

As one of the nation's largest providers of total workforce solutions in the healthcare staffing industry, this concern hits close to our heart. At Medical Solutions, we connect care by staffing facilities across the country with skilled clinical and non-clinical professionals. We take the time to get to know all candidates, so we can be confident they'll be a perfect fit for our clients' organizations — professionally, culturally and personally. And in today's challenging environment, that perfect fit can make a big difference when it comes to engagement, retention and resilience.

In a time when our healthcare system is doing more than ever for patients, hospital leadership and care providers

are in need of additional support. With proper planning and proactive leadership, we feel strongly that, together, we can reduce burnout and keep employees happier, healthier and better able to handle the stressors of these trying times. It has been truly remarkable to observe all that our hospital clients and our traveling staff have been able to accomplish this year. However, we recognize that the ongoing pandemic and strain on our healthcare system will continue to produce undue stress that must be managed proactively.

Recognizing that burnout is a real concern across the healthcare industry, we invite you to read more in our white paper on the proactive recruitment and retention strategies that are helping organizations avoid and manage staff burnout, while ensuring the quality care that all are committed to providing.

Sincerely,



Craig Meier
CEO, Medical Solutions

Medical Solutions
Connecting people who care

Since 2001, Medical Solutions has provided comprehensive healthcare staffing services for hospitals, clinics and medical facilities. We serve some of the nation's most respected healthcare systems and are trusted to place the industry's top clinical talent in a wide variety of positions.

Given our established experience in the industry, we created a managed service provider (MSP) program in 2012 to better help our hospital partners reach their patient care goals. Since then, Medical Solutions has been leading the way in contingent workforce management best practices. We offer strategic support in talent acquisition, workforce planning, vendor management, consolidated billing, risk mitigation and contingent labor management.

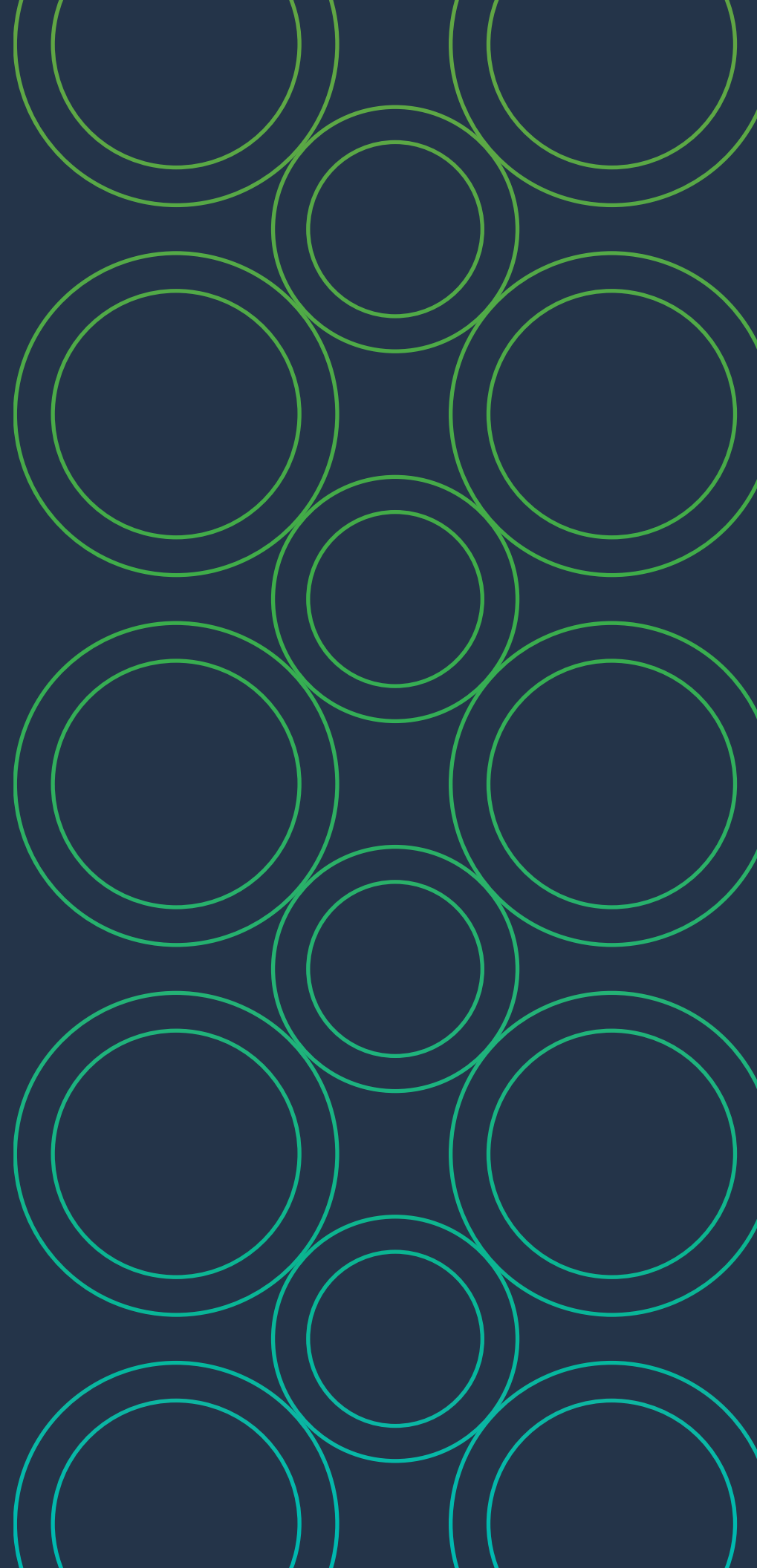


Staffing Industry Analysts Rank Medical Solutions Among:

- Best Staffing Firms to Work For
- Largest U.S. Travel Nurse Staffing Firms
- Largest U.S. Staffing Firms
- Largest U.S. Healthcare Staffing Firms
- Fastest-Growing Healthcare Staffing Firms
- Modern Healthcare's "Best Places to Work in Healthcare"
- SIA's "Largest Global Staffing Firms"

13-time Inc. Magazine's Inc. 5000 honoree

Abstract





How To Address Employee Burnout Through Recruitment and Retention Strategies

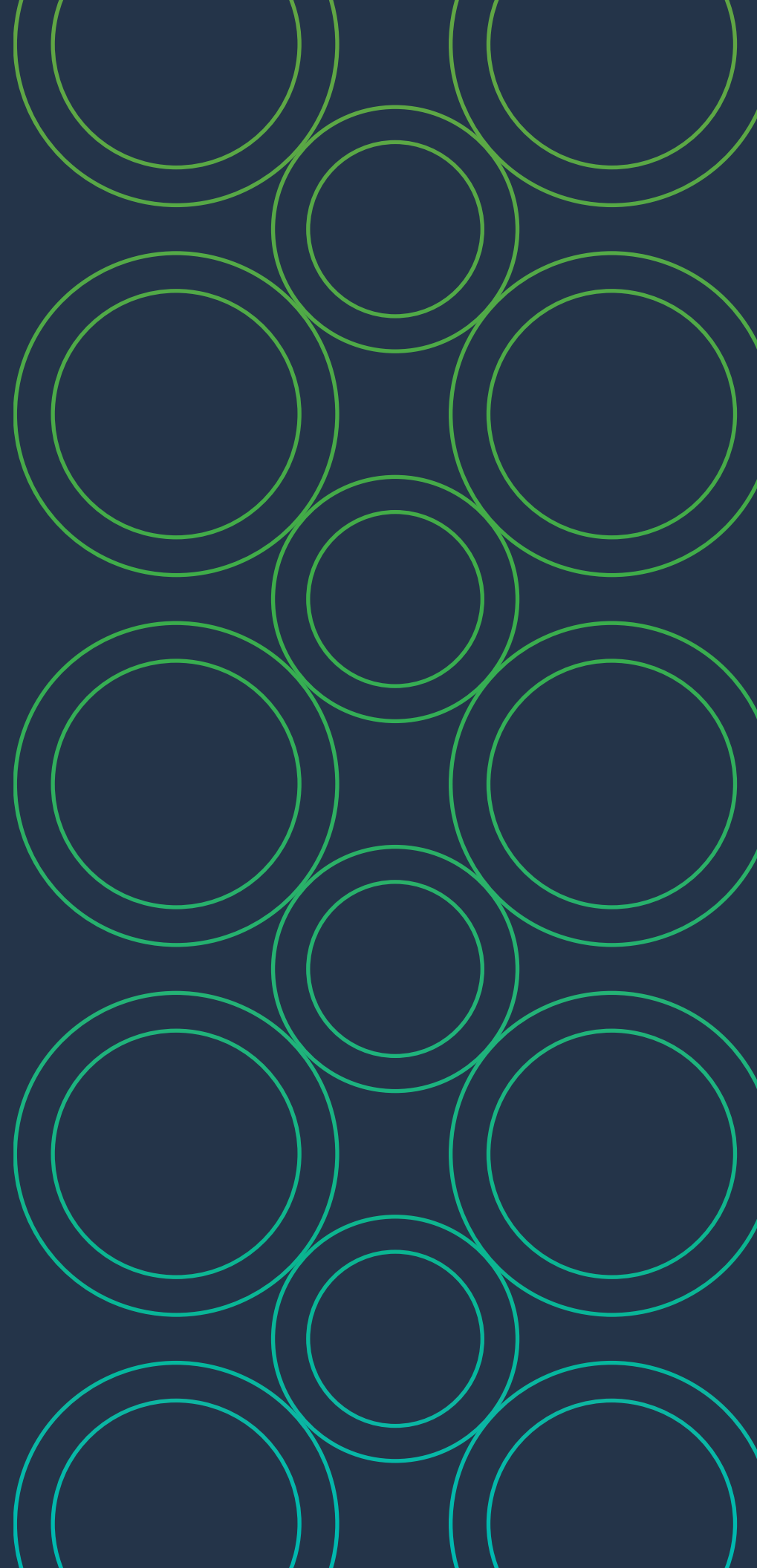
The COVID-19 pandemic has put an immense strain on our economy, and while many industries have been negatively impacted, none have been challenged more than healthcare. With greater patient loads, provider shortages and other unforeseen complications, providing quality patient care has never been more challenging.

Patients rely on us to do our best work at all times, but especially during times of intense pressure and stress.

However, in today's unprecedented environment, care providers face serious challenges, including working more hours and feeling less satisfied due to a combination of significant and impactful stress factors, resulting in burnout.

This white paper will provide insights into avoiding burnout and improving workplace culture, tips to ensure employee retention during a crisis and best practices for scaling up staff to respond to a surge in demand.

Managing Burnout Is a Growing Challenge

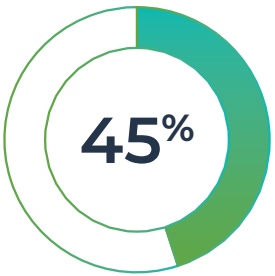


With greater patient loads, provider shortages, and unforeseen complications, many have reported decreased positivity about their medical careers. All of these are known triggers of an increasingly worrisome workforce phenomenon: employee burnout.

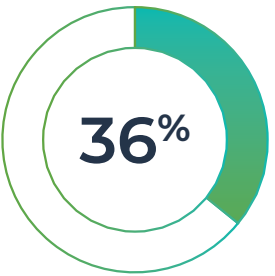
Burnout is a syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed¹. It can be characterized by three dimensions:



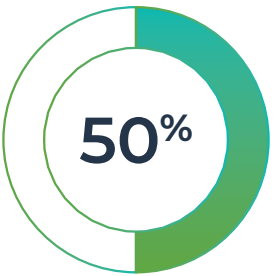
The effects of COVID-19 can be seen across all industries.



feel less connected to colleagues²



feel less positive about their careers²



of workers feel less productive overall²

However, the healthcare industry is facing its own set of challenges. Since the pandemic began, nearly half of all nurses report feeling challenged by work overload — a key indicator of burnout on the horizon. Over the past nine months, our industry has seen a significant increase in burnout coupled

with provider shortages. This is a result of a series of negative stressors, including increased patient fatality rates, greater mental and physical exhaustion of care providers, higher patient loads and concerns about personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages.

¹ Source: World Health Organization. "Burn-out an 'Occupational Phenomenon': International Classification of Diseases." 2019
² Source: Risk & Insurance. "Covid-19 Is Exacerbating Employee Burnout. Here's What Employers Can Do." 2020

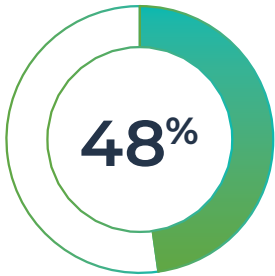
Overload and Lack of Support Contribute to Burnout

While there are many contributors to burnout, two core issues lie at the heart of this syndrome: work overload and lack of support systems to handle that overload. While these are certainly contributors to burnout in any year, 2020 has exacerbated both of these issues in an unprecedented way.

Medical professionals are feeling work overload

According to a survey by CareerBuilder, the provider shortage caused by COVID-19 is impacting every healthcare worker in the country — especially nurses. While 40% of all healthcare workers responded that they feel challenged by work overload at their jobs, the percentage is even higher for nurses, with 48% reporting overload challenges. The survey also identified another key finding: the correlation between healthcare workers' taking on additional responsibilities above their comfort level and high levels of employee turnover¹.

Due to the current provider shortage, there are fewer staff members to divide a significant workload. This difficult scenario has pushed some employees to the brink of exhaustion, which, in turn, has led to a considerable decline in job satisfaction¹. Even more troubling, each new patient added to a nurse's caseload was associated with a 23% increase in the nurse's sense of burnout and a 15% decrease in job satisfaction².



of nurses feel challenged by work overload¹

Healthcare employees don't feel they have a support system

Another key challenge and contributor to burnout is a perceived lack of support and limited mentorship opportunities across healthcare staff. When surveyed, 25% of healthcare employees stated that their organization did not provide enough mentoring, and only 37% of employees believed their organizations provided opportunities to mentor others. To further complicate this issue, almost 25% reported suffering from a poor personal fit with their supervisor — creating an environment where many healthcare employees feel they don't have someone they can turn to when experiencing symptoms of burnout.



of healthcare workers felt they suffered from a poor personal fit with their supervisor¹

¹ Source: Becker's Hospital Review. "The Top 10 Challenges Facing Healthcare Workers" 2011
² Source: HealthcareSource. "Higher Nurse-to-patient Staffing Ratios Equals Better Patient Care."

Medical professionals struggle with work/life balance and overtime

While many healthcare workers gain great fulfillment from their careers, a prolonged work/life imbalance can compromise job satisfaction and performance. According to the American Nurses Association's Health Risk Appraisal, 82% of nurses experienced significant workplace stress and 57% said they often went to work early, stayed late or worked through break time to finish their tasks. This imbalance can lead to an increased strain both on patient care and the bottom line for a hospital.

When an RN works more than 13 hours, they are 2.7x more likely to experience burnout, 2.4x more likely to feel dissatisfied with their job and 2.6x more likely to leave their job within the next year¹.

But working overtime doesn't just drive burnout and job dissatisfaction — it also significantly increases patient risk. According to a study, medication errors and hospital-acquired infections are both 3x more likely when overtime is prevalent.

Persistent Contributors to Healthcare Worker Burnout

Lack of support system¹

82%
of nurses experienced significant workplace stress

25%
of healthcare employees felt their organization lacked mentoring

Lack of work/life balance¹

20%
of physicians report working 61-80 hours each week²

57%
said they often went to work early, stayed late or worked through break time to finish their work¹

Working overtime adds risk²

3.71x
more likely that medication errors may occur

3.39x
more likely that patients may get hospital-acquired infections

¹ Source: American Nurses Association. "Health Risk Appraisal." 2016
² Source: National Council of State Boards of Nursing

Staff Turnover Is Impacting the Bottom Line

From an operational perspective, burnout and the increased employee turnover it generates can create significant pressure on an organization's resources and budget. While high-quality patient care remains the number one priority, organizations must remain cognizant of operational costs and how day-to-day inefficiencies and high turnover impact their bottom line. With COVID-19 driving extreme revenue loss for many hospitals, the cost of turnover is a pain point that can and must be managed.

Staff turnover can have a profound impact on diminishing hospital margins. For example, the average cost of turnover for one bedside RN is \$44,400 (ranging from \$33,300 to \$56,000), resulting in the average hospital losing up to \$6.1 million a year in total RN turnover¹. This also leads to administrative burdens, as the need to

backfill these positions creates more work for HR services, workplace training and occupational health risks — all of which play a part and have an associated cost related to burnout.

Additionally, the risk of a reduction in fee-for-service is a concern. High turnover may compromise quality of care and lead to decreased patient satisfaction ratings. With HCAHPS scores directly tied to reimbursement rates, turnover may result in significant revenue loss for the system and further compound the pressures on already stressed staff¹.

Ultimately, turnover caused by overworked nurses and employee burnout can have serious financial implications for healthcare organizations and potentially dangerous patient care consequences if not properly managed.

Understand burnout warning signs



Increasing nurse-to-patient ratios



Spikes in absences, sick calls and work avoidance



Sustained overtime for care providers

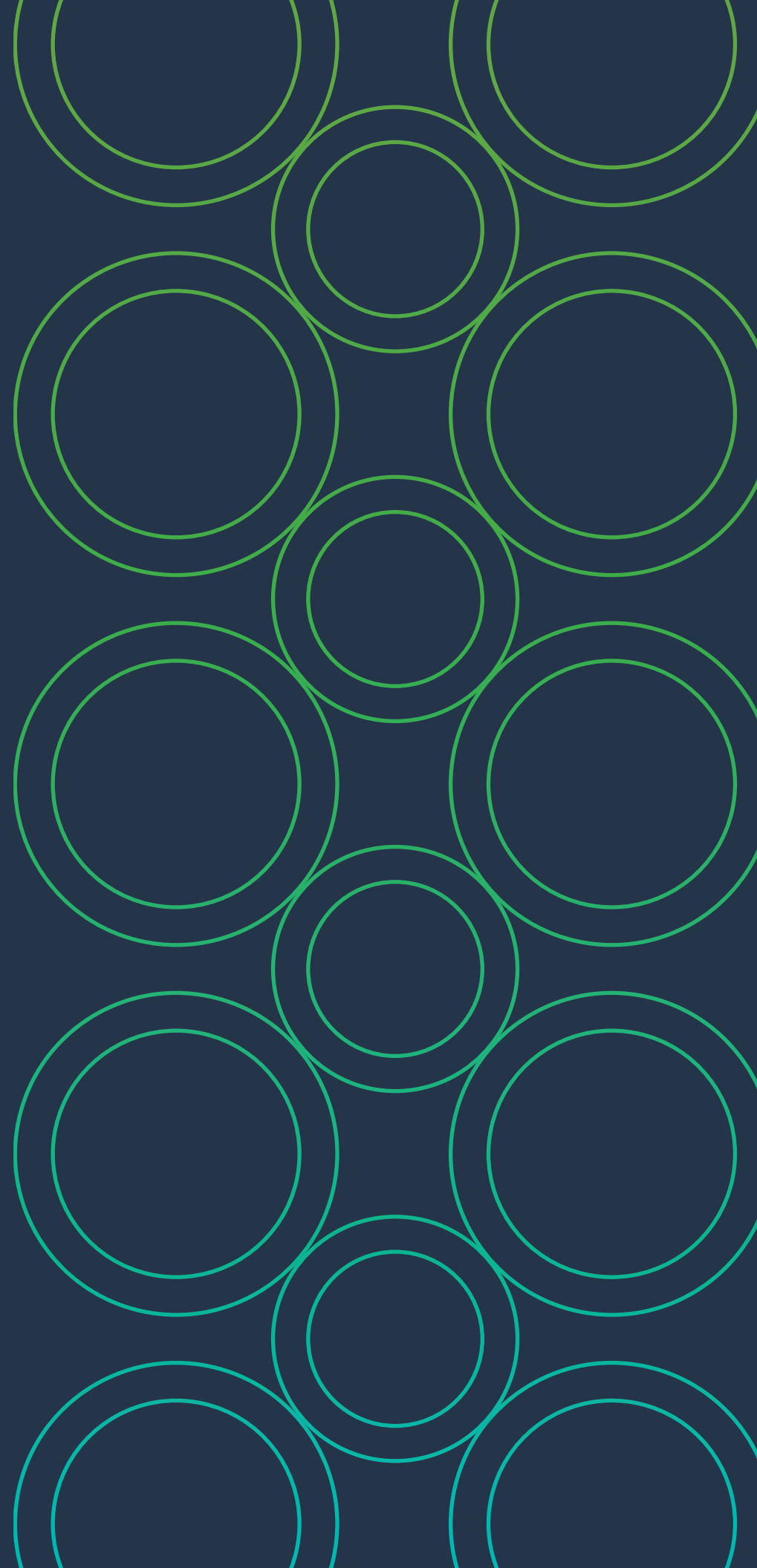


Consistent changes in department

¹ Source: NSI Nursing Solutions. "Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report." 2020

Recruiting Strategy

Best practices for scaling up
your staff to respond to a surge



Candidate Evaluations

The first real opportunity a system has to impact workforce burnout is prioritizing intentionality in regard to its hiring practice. Traditionally, healthcare organizations have thorough vetting processes for candidate evaluation based on the following objective, clinical criteria: the skill set of an individual in relation to the profile of the open position, nurse-to-patient ratio targets and common diagnoses of the unit and patient type. However, over the course of 20 years placing healthcare workers with facilities, Medical Solutions has found that the root of many terminations is actually in response to more subjective, soft-skills — in other words, those aspects of a candidate that are difficult to quantify.

One way of looking at the subjective is through the lens of cultural fit. This includes hiring a worker who fits the style of nursing needed, filling roles

based on past experience in facility types, understanding candidates' family and community needs and evaluating their communication style.

Research shows that hiring based on culture is just as important as hiring for technical skills, and that both aspects should be considered important during the hiring process. While infrequent, Medical Solutions sees that 21% of contingent assignments that end early are due to issues relating to a poor cultural fit².

It's critical to integrate the cultural context into your candidate evaluation process, whether implemented internally or through a staffing partner. While this level of evaluation may take more time upfront, it will reduce turnover for your organization while decreasing your financial risk in the long run.

Workplace Culture Is Key to Reducing Burnout

A strong workplace culture can be fostered by transparency on the part of the facility and its management starting on day one and should continue beyond the hiring and onboarding process. It's important for employees to always feel appreciated, valued and to have their voices heard throughout their tenure, especially regarding decisions that may

directly impact them or patient care. Should leadership not anticipate how organizational decisions impact those on the front line, employees may feel disconnected from, and dissatisfied with, the organization's culture — ultimately resulting in an unhealthy work environment.



Proactive Planning

Lastly, it's crucial to have a plan in place that goes beyond the traditional evaluation of existing resources, particularly in terms of crisis planning. A clear indicator of the RN staffing crisis is the rising vacancy rate. Currently, it stands at 9%, up a full point from 2019. Approximately 20% of hospitals reported an RN vacancy rate of less than 5%, while a third reported a vacancy rate exceeding 10%. The RN Recruitment Difficulty Index remains elevated at 81 days on average, regardless of specialty.

In reality, it takes close to 3 months to recruit an experienced RN¹.

COVID-19 has taught us that while most health systems have an emergency management plan in place, there are gaps that cause a lag in supporting patient influx. For example, dual employees and a float pool may lead a system to believe it is fully staffed when, in fact, it may be running short.

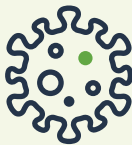
Attempting to fill these gaps with internal resources can result in increased nurse-to-patient ratios, overtime and burnout. For emergency management planning, Medical Solutions recommends having a managed services provider already in place to include external resources in your support plan and ensure there are no lags in addressing unforeseen staffing needs.

¹ Source: NSI Nursing Solutions. "Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report." 2020

Setting up your crisis management staffing plan



Evaluate your health system's dual employees to understand where gaps may exist across facilities



Account for staff who can't work due to illness or children at home



Consider and engage your float pool



A staffing partnership can help avoid lag



Lower your risk of not having staff when you need them



Partnerships don't have any upfront costs



Benefit from your partner's ability to project staffing needs based on past facility data

Scaling up your staff does not have to mean sacrificing quality candidates. In fact, recruitment practices are more important than ever. In addition, once new staff is in place, proactive measures must be taken to ensure they are able to avoid, or equipped to combat, top contributors to burnout. The well-being and emotional resilience of healthcare workers are key components of maintaining essential healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to anticipate the stresses associated with this work and ensure resources are in place to support them. Monitoring and assessing the mental health of healthcare personnel is important. Additionally, should an employee become infected, support will be needed for their successful reintegration with colleagues once they are safely able to return to work¹.

¹ Source: U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. National Center for PTSD. "Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak." 2020



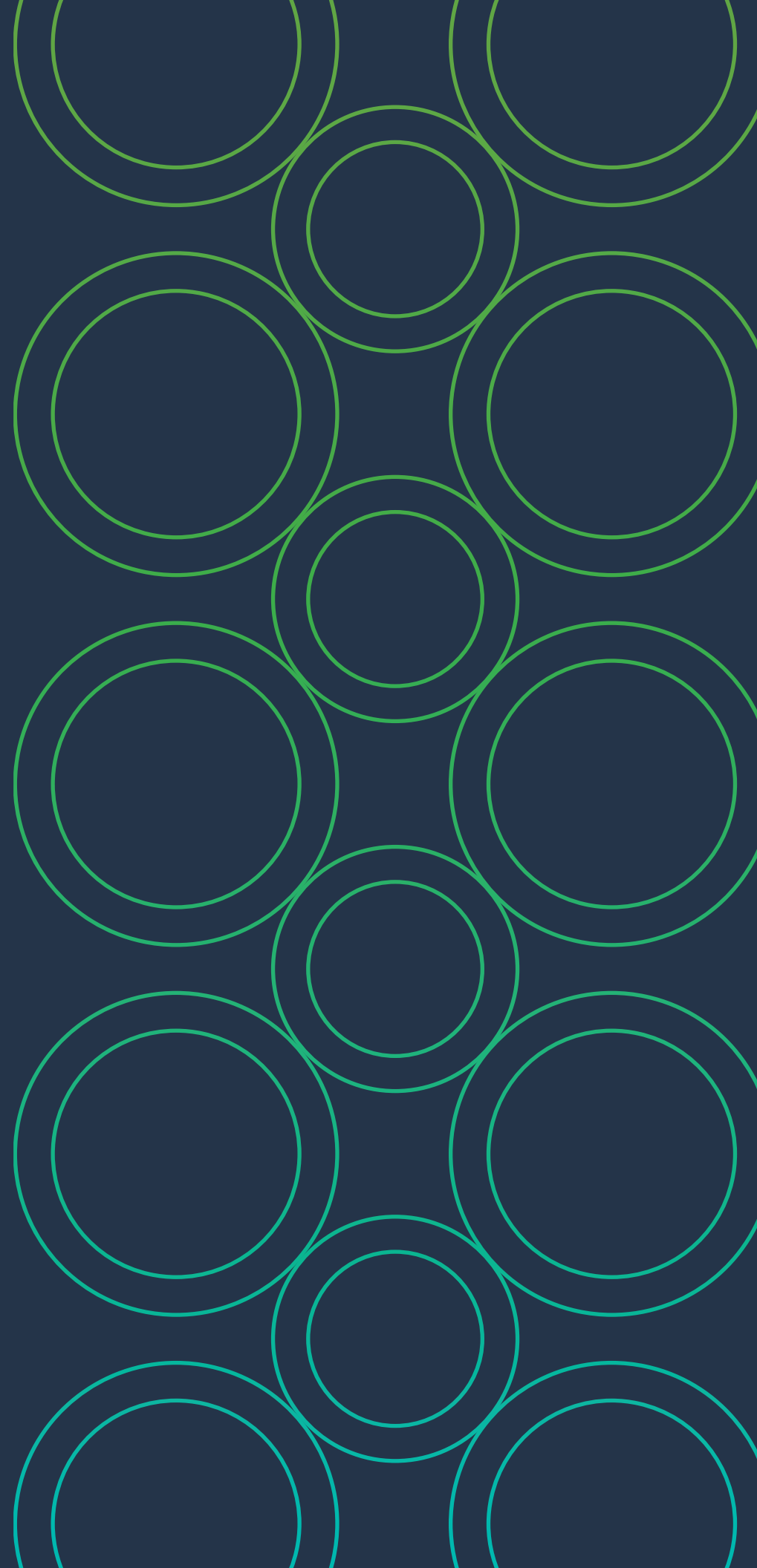
Ways to care for the well-being and emotional resilience of your workforce.

Listen and support. Have nurse managers available 24/7 to support and counsel nurses through difficult situations.

Understand individual's goals. Know what your nurses like to do, where they want to be and what they want their future to look like.

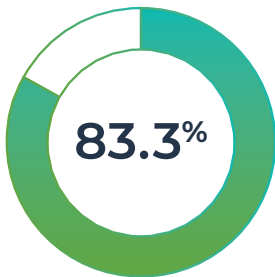
Retention Strategy

How to ensure employee retention during a crisis

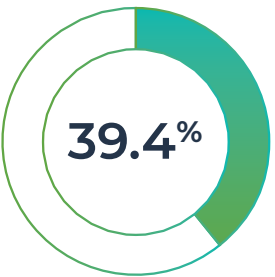


Retention efforts are key to maintaining a thriving system and mitigating financial risk. Nurses are already working extended or additional shifts, which over the past nine months have been longer

and more stressful than ever before. For most hospitals, reducing or eliminating overtime may not be feasible at this point in time. In light of these obstacles, a formal retention strategy is essential.



of organizations report a retention strategy being a key initiative



have translated this into a formal retention strategy¹

In addition to having a staffing partner and staffing strategy, a formal retention strategy is key. In order for a retention strategy to be most effective, it must focus on four tactical areas: transparent communication, visible leadership, maintained support and a balanced staff.

¹ Source: NSI Nursing Solutions. "Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report." 2020

01 Transparent Communication

Clear communication is a cornerstone of every successful organization. The first step in alleviating anxiety for your staff is communicating your proactive staffing plan early and often. Involve your care team in monitoring staffing needs and solutions and implement listening panels for care providers. Check to see if your staffing partner can provide support for some of your communication needs. For example, a senior nursing support line may be

available to help guide more junior team members through challenging situations or concerns.

Being transparent with employees builds trust from the bottom up and makes for a more cohesive, engaged and efficient workforce. By taking steps to communicate plans, ideas and procedures, organizations can begin to create a culture that is better prepared to handle adversity, while establishing trust.





02 Visible Leadership

Present, visible leadership enables connection and establishes a support system for workers exhibiting signs of burnout. This is especially true for travelers who are working with an outside staffing agency and are new to the facility, and younger cohorts who look to more established nurses for guidance and support. In these cases, knowing who to turn to — and having access to them — can make all the difference.

Take steps to make sure that clinical leadership is visible on the floor throughout different shifts and departments. This is essential to creating a stable work environment, particularly in times of crisis. When possible, this level of visibility is both practically and emotionally beneficial, as it allows those in decision-making roles to truly evaluate their team's physical and mental readiness and shift staffing plans as needed.

03 Maintained Support

Caring for the well-being and emotional resilience of healthcare workers is imperative, but finding the time and resources to support this need can be difficult.

Medical Solutions recommends examining all resources available to ensure a full support system is in place — whether internally or through a third party — to provide counseling services such as mental health support, grief counseling or individual advocates for

nurses. It is also important to consider offering these services to non-clinical roles who also may be experiencing a reduction in work/life balance and be at risk for burnout.

Support can also be in the form of benefits for your staff. Communicating available Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits*, considering a pay bump for care providers involved with COVID-19 patients or providing meals are all great ways to show support.

04 Balancing Your Staff

While 52.9% of hospitals have strategies in place to protect new hires, only 19.7% have a strategy for retaining tenured workers¹. This is even more problematic when you consider that younger workers rely on more experienced staff members to provide mentorship and leadership.

Retaining your tenured workers helps eliminate the challenges of filling openings. Their leadership also supports retention efforts for new hires, strengthens the team's culture and helps develop less experienced staff into your leaders of tomorrow.

¹ Source: NSI Nursing Solutions. "Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report." 2020

* Talk to your HR representative for what EAP benefits may be available in your organization

Creative Solutions

Nursing Aides or Nursing Assistants

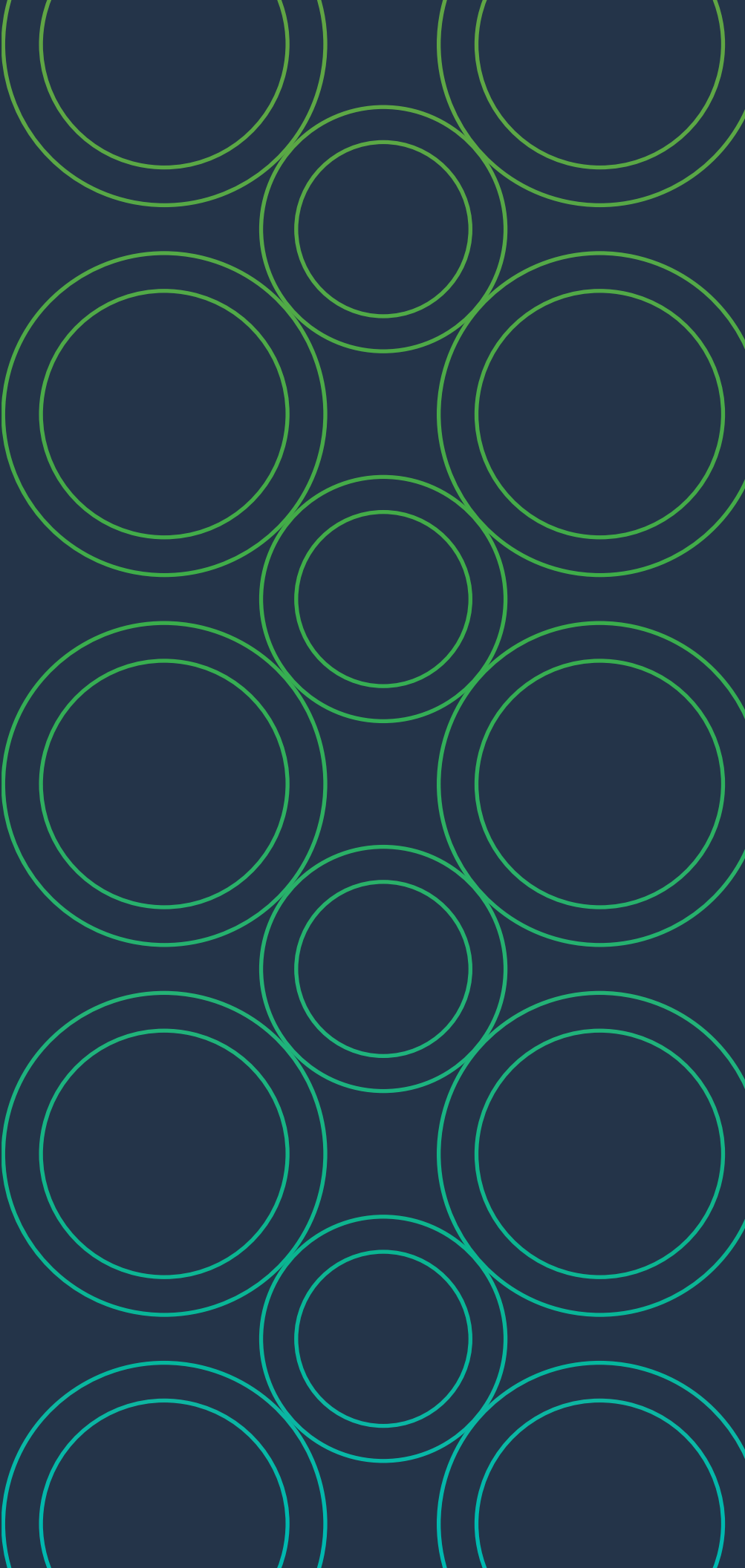
With family and friends often restricted from patient rooms during the pandemic, Nursing Aides and Assistants can help take on tasks that the patient's personal support system would traditionally handle. This can help alleviate the workload of your RNs and other care team members.

Nursing Extender Program

Redeploying nurses from units with reduced census and closures to ICUs can help balance workloads and allow ICU nurses to focus on head-to-toe critical patient assessments. Nurses paired with an ICU nurse carrying a patient load above normal can assist with restraint checks, medication administration, IV starts, position changes and family communication.



Key Takeaways





Build a proactive recruitment plan so you're prepared for a staffing emergency.



Have a staffing partnership in place before an emergency arises so you can move quickly and maintain quality patient care.



Understand the emotional needs of your Care Team and have a support system in place before a crisis hits.

Hospital executives today are faced with a truly unprecedented situation and are working tirelessly to ensure quality care and the well-being of their staff. We have been so impressed by the extensive measures our clients and those leading hospitals have taken to meet extraordinary demand.

Medical Solutions is here to help you address the needs of your healthcare organization, whether

it's to decrease staff burnout, fill your gaps, mitigate the impact of staff shortages or create a stronger workplace culture — all while continuing to provide exceptional patient care.

While we cannot control what type of crisis arises, we are in full control of how we respond and prepare. As your managed services partner, we'll be with you all the way.

Let's Connect

We know healthcare staffing plays a crucial role in the delivery of quality patient care. We're here to help answer all your questions.

Contact

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