Mid-Level Manager Competency Development Guide



Introduction and Overview

A highly competent mid-level manager is critical to the quality and stability of the aging services workforce, and to the well-being and safety of individuals who need support while living in residential care and community-based settings. Yet, many employees are promoted into management positions before they receive proper training or develop an understanding of the key competencies that will enable them to be effective managers.

The LeadingAge Workforce Cabinet has been working since April 2012 to develop tools that providers of long-term services and supports (LTSS) can use to develop and strengthen the aging services workforce across the full continuum of staff and settings. During this multi-year effort, the cabinet identified a set of skills and behaviors that it believes will help mid-level managers provide effective leadership across a variety of positions and LTSS settings, including:

- Continuing care retirement communities.
- Nursing homes.
- Assisted living communities.
- Home health agencies.
- Home and community-based services settings.
- Affordable senior housing communities.

Mid-level managers put an organization's vision, mission and values into action on the ground. They can evaluate, hire and fire staff.

Mid-level managers work in the following positions across the continuum:

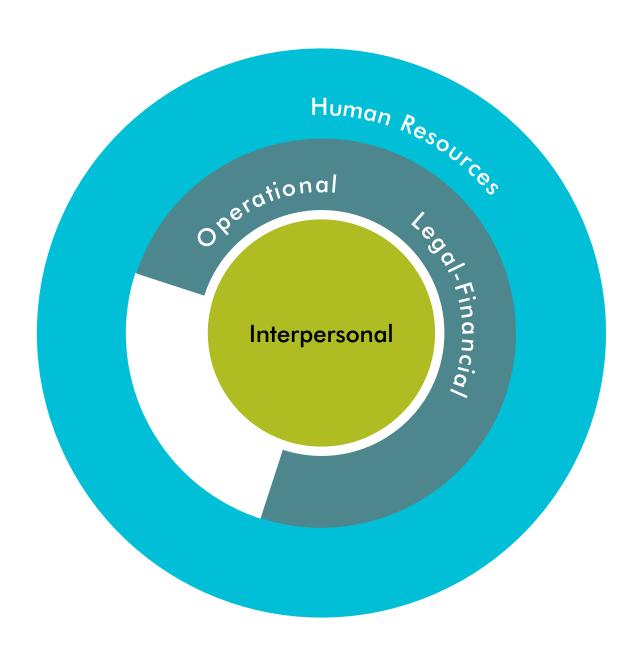
- Assisted Living/Personal Care Manager.
- Home Health Team Manager.
- Nursing Home Director of Nursing, Dietary Manager, Activities Manager, and other mid-level positions.
- Housing Manager.
- Home Health Team Manager.
- Director or Manager of a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).
- Adult Day Center Director.

Structure of this Guide

The Mid-Level Manager Competency Development Guide is based on a Mid-Level Manager Competency Model featuring four broad competency areas:

- 1. Interpersonal.
- 2. Operational.
- Financial-Legal.
- 4. Human Resources.

Competency Model



For each broad competency area, the Mid-Level Manager Competency Development Guide presents:

- Core attributes to which the mid-level manager should aspire.
- Domains designed to ground each competency in observable behaviors.
- Higher level skills and behavioral areas.
- A checklist of specific tasks associated with performing the job function.

How to Use This Guide

The Mid-Level Manager Competency Development Guide can be used to help mid-level managers acquire the skills, knowledge and behavioral characteristics they need to collaborate with and manage frontline staff.

Providers and mid-level managers can use this tool in a variety of ways, including:

- **Continuing education:** Providers and mid-level managers can review the competencies to identify the skills that are critical to the organization's success, and the skills that need further development among specific mid-level managers or across middle management as a whole. Continuing education can be tailored to address these learning needs.
- **Performance evaluations:** The competencies can be used as a foundation for a mid-level manager's performance review. Existing documents used in the performance review process can be updated to make them more competency-based.
- **Professional development:** The competencies can be used to help individual mid-level managers, and the organization's Human Resources department, design professional development plans and select specific courses and programs for skill enhancement.
- **Recruitment:** This guide is not designed to be a screening tool for hiring or promoting mid-level managers. However, it can be used as a framework for assessing the relative competence of individuals applying for jobs.

Caveats and Clarifications

Please keep the following caveats and clarifications in mind when reviewing and using the *Mid-Level Manager Competency Development Guide*:

- This guide focuses on management and supervision skills. The competencies contained in this guide focus on management and supervision skills that can help mid-level managers lead and strengthen frontline staff. These competencies do not address the technical or clinical skills specific to a position. Please note that mid-level managers should have a working knowledge of best practices in the area for which they are responsible, in addition to the management and supervisory skills identified in the following pages. For example, a Director of Nursing must possess clinical competencies, in addition to management competencies.
- **Providers need to be realistic.** It is not realistic to expect mid-level managers to possess every skill identified in the competency model. Working together, providers and mid-level managers can use this tool to identify and build up the skills that are not currently present in the organization, either for a particular mid-level manager or across all of the organization's middle managers.

- "Individuals" receive services and supports. The LeadingAge Workforce Cabinet understands that providers deliver long-term services and supports to a variety of individuals in a variety of settings. Some providers refer to these individuals as "residents," while other providers call them "clients." Still others use additional terms to describe the people who receive services and supports. For clarity's sake, this guide refers to all recipients of long-term services and supports as "individuals."
- Family members and others support the individual. The LeadingAge Workforce Cabinet also recognizes that many individuals have a support network consisting of family members, friends, neighbors and/or other members of the community. This support network is an essential element of the long-term services and supports system and must be involved in designing, implementing and assessing an individual's service plan. For clarity's sake, this guide refers collectively to members of the individual's support network as the "family/support network."

Interpersonal Core Competencies

Core Attribute:

The mid-level manager has the skills to communicate effectively with staff, and with individuals and their family/support networks. The mid-level manager also has the skills to collaborate with, empower, inspire and manage staff.

Domain	Behaviors that Demonstrate Competency
Accountability	 Holds himself/herself and other people accountable to standards of performance by providing task clarity, setting limits or boundaries, communicating clear standards for high performance, and taking corrective measures to ensure compliance. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes. Establishes accountability benchmarks.
Advocacy	 Builds and maintains trust relationships with staff, individuals¹ and their family/support networks. Seeks and acts on satisfaction feedback from employees, individuals and family/support networks. Implements and evaluates improvements for individuals. Uses connections to and knowledge of frontline staff, as well as an understanding of the organization's "on the ground" needs, to communicate with upper management and influence regulations and policies that impact the organization.
Communication	 Understands and adapts communication to the audience. Practices focused and active listening by recognizing and responding to the feelings and concerns of others. Keeps people informed. Demonstrates a range of effective communication skills to establish supportive and collaborative relationships with staff, individuals and their family/support networks. Uses verbal, nonverbal and written communication, including emails and text messages.
Cultural Competency	 Values diversity. Is sensitive to and understands individuals, family/support networks and staff with diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Helps staff understand and respond to the culture of the individuals and their family/support networks.
Education, Training and Self-Development	Identifies and seeks opportunities for professional development based on his/her personal strengths and needs, the impact that he/she has on others, and emerging evidence-based practices.

 $^{^{\}rm l}$ This guide refers to all recipients of long-term services and supports as "individuals."

Initiative	 Intentionally and regularly scans the environment to identify a problem, obstacle or opportunity. Takes action to address current and future problems or opportunities. Trusts his/her capability and judgment to accomplish a task. Selects an effective approach to a task or problem. Takes on challenges. Applies critical-thinking skills to solve problems by generating, evaluating and implementing solutions and resolving conflicts. Practices innovative thinking.
Leadership	 Models, advocates, communicates and leads the creation of interdepartmental systems, processes and programs, all within the focus of organizational mission and vision, to improve quality of care and life for individuals and to improve the workplace environment for staff. Manages laterally as well as up-and-down. Talks with staff about the need for change. Encourages others to be open to change as a way to move forward. Listens to the viewpoints of staff. Energizes individuals and their family/support networks, staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate, as a way to sustain their commitment to changes in approaches, processes and strategies. Acts as a change agent.
Teamwork	 Helps staff teams increase their capabilities, maximize their potential and recognize their options. Models and encourages departments to work cooperatively to care for individuals and their family/support networks, and improve the organization.

Checklists

Accountability

Holds himself/herself and other people accountable to standards of performance, monitors and evaluates plans, and establishes accountability benchmarks.

- □ Sets clear standards for high performance, and models compliance with those standards. Provides clarity on requested tasks. Keeps people informed. Sets limits and boundaries for the behaviors and actions of others.
- □ Takes responsibility for personal and group performance outcomes. Anticipates and takes action on team performance shortfalls and problems, and holds people accountable for performance. Explains the magnitude of shortfalls and problems to staff, and empowers staff to move forward. Creates an environment in which people can work together to meet organizational goals. Works toward compliance.
- □ Acknowledges and learns from mistakes without blaming others. Recognizes the impact of his/her behavior on others. Calculates the impact of his/her actions or words.

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Advocacy

Builds and maintains trust relationships with staff, individuals and their family/support networks by seeking satisfaction feedback, implementing improvements for individuals, and influencing regulations and policies that impact the organization and its frontline staff.

- ☐ Builds and maintains relationships with individuals, family/support networks and staff.
- Advocates on behalf of individuals and family/support networks to address their needs, expectations and priorities.
- Assists the individual and the family/support network in overcoming barriers to services when the individual's service needs are not met.
- □ Empowers and encourages others to develop new ideas and standards that respond to the expectations of individuals and their family/support networks.
- □ Supports the right of individuals to live in an environment free from abuse.
- Communicates with upper management about the needs of the staff and organization to influence regulations and policies that impact them.

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Communication

Establishes supportive and collaborative relationships with staff by keeping people informed, adapting communication to the audience, practicing focused listening, responding to the feelings and concerns of others, and demonstrating a range of effective communication skills.

- □ Creates effective, positive, ongoing and open communication with various populations at all levels of the organization. Focuses communication on the needs, interests and desired results expressed by these populations. Employs active listening skills that include listening and responding to the information received, paraphrasing, and asking open-ended questions. Displays empathy for colleagues and staff.
- □ Prepares effective written proposals, materials and/or presentations, and develops well-reasoned recommendations to upper management.
- Understands the need for sensitivity when interpreting electronic communication, and prioritizes the mode of communication that is appropriate for the situation. Communicates and addresses problems with staff in private.
- Uses and stays current with technical terms, as needed, for effective service delivery. Explains technical terms, as necessary, to ensure that individuals and their family/support networks understand those terms.
- □ Supports appropriate communication for small groups and teams by communicating expectations, promoting cooperative behaviors, and seeking feedback in order to improve communications.
- ☐ Facilitates group interactions using varied techniques, including brainstorming, consensus building, group problem-solving and conflict resolution. Demonstrates good meeting management techniques.

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	Values the diverse backgrounds and characteristics of individuals, family/support networks and staff, and helps staff members understand and respond to the culture of individuals and their family/support networks.		
	Interacts sensitively with diverse cultures and different generations, internal and external. Respects the beliefs, values and customs of people.		
	Models healthy communication with staff, volunteers, individuals and their family/support networks. Employs honest interactions, courtesy, empathy and sensitivity to how communication affects others. Responds constructively and calmly.		
	Displays sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and social issues of individuals and groups, and understands and appreciates their differences.		
	Uses his/her insights and perceptions to create greater diversity and multiculturalism and to respond positively to different		
	community and demographic groups. Understands the underlying reasons for different behaviors.		
Вас	k to Interpersonal Core Competencies Table		
	Education, Training and Self-Development		
	ntifies and seeks opportunities for professional development based on his/her personal strengths and needs, the impact that she has on others, and emerging evidence-based practices.		
	Systematically assesses the need for personal and professional training. Completes required training, education and certification, as well as continued professional development.		
	Seeks feedback on his/her performance from multiple sources, including supervisors, peers and staff. Uses performance evaluations and feedback to improve performance.		
	Seeks opportunities for growth and self-improvement in knowledge, skills and abilities. Continues to grow as a professional. Keeps abreast of practices in the field.		
	Participates and develops relationships in peer-networking groups within different communities.		
	Learns from line staff.		
	Knows his/her strengths and weaknesses.		
Bac	k to Interpersonal Core Competencies Table		
	Initiative		
	ntifies and addresses current and future problems or opportunities, and confidently uses critical-thinking skills and innovative king to implement solutions and resolve conflicts.		
	Recognizes and responds to opportunities and problems, and overcomes obstacles.		
	Acts quickly and decisively in a crisis or other time-sensitive situation. Is proactive.		
	Anticipates short-term and longer term opportunities, obstacles and problems. Implements interventions or innovative solutions to create opportunities, prevent problems or avoid future crises. Conducts cost/benefit analyses.		
	Acts confidently within his/her job or role and in uncertain circumstances. Works without the need for direct supervision. Seeks input from others. Uses critical-thinking skills.		
	Seeks challenging assignments and new responsibilities. Understands when to be firm, and when to be flexible, in the face of disagreements with management.		

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Leadership

Works to improve quality of care and life for individuals, and the workplace environment for staff, by acting as a change agent who creates and leads interdisciplinary systems and encourages others to be open to change and sustain their commitment to change.

	Models the organization's values, mission and vision in daily work and through interaction and communication with others.
	Works collaboratively with other managers to advocate, develop and implement innovative and creative strategies for achieving short- and long-term organizational goals and meeting organizational needs that are aligned with the organization's vision and mission.
	Sees opportunities and acts on them. Works with the team to identify, within the scope of practice, where change is needed, what needs to be changed, and strategies for change.
	Generates commitment and enthusiasm from others to set and achieve challenging goals and objectives and live up to the organization's vision, mission and values.
	Actively seeks ongoing feedback to make necessary changes and adjustments as the organization moves from its current to its desired state. This includes:
	Incorporating planning and implementation elements into every change.
	• Being sensitive to the needs of staff at all levels to be involved and to feel part of the organizational culture.
	Valuing and incorporating staff opinions into decision-making.
	Researches evidence-based practices. Uses data to support change.
	Reinforces and serves as a model for embracing desired change through actions that are consistent with the change. Takes a long-term view. Thinks outside the box.
	Provides focused leadership to advance change initiatives. Provides direction for overcoming adversity and resistance to change.
	Adapts to new ideas and paradigms, and actively seeks to generate new ideas and changes, as appropriate.
	Matches his/her management style to each situation in order to achieve the desired outcome.
Вас	k to Interpersonal Core Competencies Table
	Teamwork Teamwork
	ps staff teams increase their capabilities, maximize their potential and recognize their options while encouraging departments vork collaboratively for the good of individuals, their family/support networks and the organization.
	Promotes and enables interdisciplinary collaboration, cooperation and team effectiveness.
	Integrates processes and programs across departments, and communicates across departments.
	Provides essential information to individuals and groups for decision-making and fulfillment of responsibilities. Communicates regularly with people affected by a team decision.
	Values and respects the contributions of all team members to meeting the needs of the individual, the family/support network and the community.
	Is a team leader. Sets expectations, models a good work ethic, and works with the team. Develops the strengths of team members.
	Uses available evidence to inform effective teamwork and team-based practices.
	Deals with conflicts in an appropriate, timely and constructive manner. Uses effective inter-professional communication and shared problem-solving to strengthen the ability of team members to work together effectively.
	Understands his/her role to market the organization and promote its services to external audiences.

Operational Core Competencies

Core Attribute:

The mid-level manager has the skills to run and manage a highly functioning department.

Domain	Knowledge and Behaviors that Demonstrate Competency
Information Technology	 Understands the role that administrative and clinical information technology and decision-support tools can play in facilitating process and performance improvement. Knows the benefits and responsibilities associated with using these technologies.
Organizational Awareness and Practice	 Understands the organizational dynamics, formal and informal decision-making structures, and power relationships in the organization and in the field of long-term services and supports. Communicates to staff, and puts into action, the organization's mission and vision.
Performance Improvement	 Uses statistical and financial methods and metrics to set goals and systematically analyze, evaluate and measure organizational performance. Designs and implements evidence-based strategies and empowers staff to improve performance. Models best practices, and leads by example.
Professionalism and Ethics	Demonstrates professional standards and codes of ethical behavior and social accountability.
Understanding Consumers of Long-Term Services and Supports	Understands the purposes and goals of long-term services and supports (LTSS) and how LTSS can enhance the health, well-being, and independence of the individual ² while supporting the family/support network.

 $^{^{\}rm 2}$ This guide refers to all recipients of long-term services and supports as "individuals."

Checklists

Information Technology

Understands the role that administrative and clinical information technology and decision-support tools can play in facilitating process and performance improvement, as well as the benefits and responsibilities associated with using these technologies.

Recognizes the potential role that information systems can play in improving work processes and services to the individual.

□ Collaborates with others by providing input on the planning and implementation of information technology systems.

□ Understands confidentiality principles and laws associated with information technology systems.

☐ Understands and explains data and ensures accuracy and integrity of that data.

☐ Uses data when making decisions, budgeting, planning, benchmarking and carrying out other operational tasks.

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Organizational Awareness and Practice

Understands the dynamics, formal and informal decision-making structures, and power relationships in the organization and in the field of long-term services and supports, and puts the organization's mission and vision into practice.

Assesses the organization, including its corporate values and culture, business processes and the impact of its systems on operations. Takes the lead in putting the organization's culture into practice.

Uses the formal structure or hierarchy of the organization to get things done. Understands the chain of command, positional power, rules and regulations, and policies and procedures.

Uses the organization's informal structure when the formal structure does not work as well as desired. Recognizes key actors and decision influencers within that informal structure.

☐ Recognizes the organization's norms and values, and adopts the language of the organization.

Understands the expectations, priorities and values of the organization's many stakeholders. Builds coalitions and consensus around the organization's vision, mission and agendas.

☐ Knows the organization's policies, procedures and protocols as they pertain to the job responsibilities of the mid-level manager.

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Performance Improvement

Systematically measures organizational performance, implements evidence-based strategies to improve performance, and empowers staff to participate in these efforts. ☐ Implements and incorporates evidence-based principles, strategies and tools into management activities. These principles, strategies and tools support continuous quality improvement to achieve better outcomes for individuals and enhanced productivity for staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate. Evaluates situations with an eye toward identifying opportunities for performance improvement. Works to identify the root cause of problems. Tracks performance. Improves work processes. Focuses objectively on systematic changes that are needed to improve an organizational process. Works to enhance organizational practices and continuous improvement by collecting and using qualitative and quantitative data to analyze problems and track the organization's performance and Implements, monitors and updates plans to improve the organization and the department. Empowers staff to participate in decision-making. Has positive expectations. Encourages others to do their best. Values and respects the input and expertise of other people. Does not play favorites. Interprets and translates the organization's long-term goals, and works with staff to achieve those goals through day-to-day tasks. Understands how the organization's goals relate to internal and external environments. Monitors and takes pride in the quality of his/her work and the work of others. Continuously searches out and acts on opportunities to improve quality and service. Continues to try new solutions until desired results are achieved. Researches effectiveness of solutions. Takes the initiative to collaborate with individuals and their family/support networks to find solutions to problems. ☐ Promotes staff self-evaluation. Encourages staff to set individual and team goals for performance improvement. Back to Operational Core Competencies Table Professionalism and Ethics Demonstrates professional standards and codes of ethical behavior and social accountability. □ Fulfills responsibilities and commitments as a manager. Demonstrates professionalism and responsibility. Complies with laws, regulations, policies, confidentiality issues and ethical codes. Acts consistently and according to the organization's expressed core values. Relates to staff, the public and individuals in an open and truthful manner. Interacts in a professional manner with individuals and their family/support networks, as well as coworkers, supervisors and all others. Develops and implements systems for tracking and sustaining social accountability. (Social accountability is an organization's obligation to take action that benefits society at large, and to build accountability that relies on civic engagement.) Back to Operational Core Competencies Table **Understanding Consumers of Long-Term Services and Supports** Understands the purposes and goals of long-term services and supports (LTSS) and how LTSS can enhance the health, well-being and independence of the individual while supporting the family/support network. ☐ Understands the components of the long-term services and supports system. Understands the current and changing needs of the populations served. Identifies the purposes and goals of supports provided to individuals and their family/support networks. Ensures that the individual's long-term services and supports are based on his or her strengths, goals and preferences. Regularly reviews the needs of individuals and changes plans as necessary. Recognizes the obstacles and barriers facing individuals who rely on long-term services and supports, as well as the obstacles and barriers facing the individual's family/support network. Back to Operational Core Competencies Table

Financial-Legal Core Competencies

Core Attribute:

The mid-level manager has skills to run and manage a highly functioning department.

Domain	Behaviors that Demonstrate Competency
Financial Skills	Maximizes available resources and finances by gathering budget-related information, managing resources, and monitoring revenues and expenses.
Standards and Regulations	 Implements federal, state and local standards and regulations for long-term services and supports. Educates staff about processes that are dictated by standards and regulations. Institutes proactive strategies to meet and exceed standards. Ensures that ongoing compliance standards are met.

 $^{^{\}rm 3}$ This guide refers to all recipients of long-term services and supports as "individuals."

Checklists

Maximizes available resources and tinances by gathering budget-related information, managing resources, and monitoring revenue and expenses.		
	Gathers budget-related information and/or creates budgets to meet department objectives. Justifies budget requests to the organization's leaders.	
	Develops and manages expenses and revenues that meet departmental or organizational objectives and financial parameters. Uses financial metrics to drive and track the organization's success. Manages budget variances, makes revisions and takes corrective actions.	
	Delegates and holds staff accountable for efficient use of resources.	
	Manages the procurement process—including purchasing and requests for proposals and quotes—with vendors, where applicable.	
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	Standards and Regulation	
Implements federal, state and local standards and regulations for long-term services and supports, educates staff about processes that are dictated by these standards and regulations, and institutes proactive strategies to meet and exceed standards.		
	Maintains current knowledge of, and complies with, applicable federal, state and local standards and regulations for long-term services and supports, as well as their implications for the practice of long-term services and supports.	
	Educates staff and other departments about processes that are dictated by regulations and standards. Alerts staff to relevant changes in regulations and standards.	
	Interprets regulatory standards for individuals and their family/support networks.	
	Establishes systems and protocols that meet and exceed regulatory standards and compliance requirements.	
	Implements necessary corrective action after analyzing areas of non-compliance. Documents all incidents and communications with staff.	
П	Institutes proactive risk-management strategies	

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Human Resources Core Competencies

Core Attribute:

The mid-level manager has skills to hire and retain staff and to continuously develop himself/herself and staff.

Domain	Behaviors that Demonstrate Competency
Human Resources Management	 Develops, implements and evaluates strategies to recruit and retain staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate, by aligning the organization's mission, vision and values with the department's short- and long-term goals. Complies with legal and regulatory requirements, and ensures worker safety. Optimizes the performance of the workforce by effectively managing himself/herself, the work and the team. Successfully collaborates with other people and groups.

Checklist

Human Resources Management

Develops, implements and evaluates strategies to recruit and retain staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate, and optimizes the performance of the workforce by effectively managing himself/herself, the work and the team.

☐ Appropriately applies the organization's human resources policies and procedures.

	Works collaboratively with human resources professionals to implement effective strategies for recruiting and retaining quality staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate. This includes:
	Providing input into job descriptions.
	Participating in the selection of employees.
	• Using effective interviewing skills to evaluate the abilities of the potential talent pool.
	Setting clear standards for high performance.
	Orienting new employees to the organization.
	Implementing retention practices.
	Coaching employees.
	Informing and promoting staff members and staff teams.
	Recognizing, rewarding and valuing the expertise and input of others.
	Making jobs meaningful, challenging and contributory to the department and the organization.
	Creates, fine-tunes and manages workflow, staffing patterns and staff schedules so they maximize the effectiveness of the individual's care and the effective deployment of staff and volunteers/interns, where appropriate.
	Understands effective safety and health-management policies and procedures. Creates a culture of safety for staff. Ensures that work processes are free from safety and health hazards. Works with employees on safety and training. Puts programs in place to promote worker safety.
	Creates and maintains complete, timely, accurate and confidential staff records. Collaborates with appropriate departments, including human resources, to carry out performance management and workforce development.
	Oversees ongoing and timely performance management. Effectively utilizes the organization's method of performance evaluation. Ensures that staff evaluations are timely, accurate, frequent, collaborative and based on clear, job-based criteria.
	Implements the organization's progressive discipline policy, and its internal grievance process, in a fair and consistent manner.
	Assures quality orientation and ongoing training that represent evidence-based practices, use adult learning principles, and employ staff as trainers and mentors.
	Expresses positive expectations of how staff members will develop their skills over time. Believes others want to and can learn to improve their performance. Assists and coordinates educational opportunities to support the goals of workers.
	Nurtures top employees so they can successfully assume leadership roles within the organization. Helps team members develop the skills and confidence to work independently of supervisor.
	Empowers and motivates staff. Provides constructive feedback and support.
	Works with staff to create performance improvement plans.
	Models self-care and work-life balance.
Bac	k to Human Resources Core Competencies Table

Resources

ACHE Healthcare Executives: Competencies Assessment Tool 2013

Department of Labor: Long-term Care, Supports, and Services Competency Model (LTCSS)

National Center for Healthcare Leadership: Healthcare Leadership Competency Model

Partnership for Health in Aging: Multidisciplinary Competencies in the Care of Older Adults at the Completion of the Entry-Level Health Professional Degree

Competencies for Senior Nurse Leaders in LTC: Vision Statement