

New Opportunities in Senior Care

Critical strategies for combating
three big industry challenges
A special report, brought to you
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The healthcare industry as a whole was already facing some daunting challenges around quality of care, shrinking budgets and staffing shortages. Then the pandemic hit and exacerbated the challenges — and nowhere has that been more evident than in senior care facilities.

Even as we saw amazing nurses and other staff rise to the challenge and care for residents during unprecedented times, the pandemic has exposed clear vulnerabilities in processes, particularly around infectious disease and illness control.

Still, out of the disruption comes a tremendous opportunity to rethink old procedures and establish new ones that can have a positive impact on some of the biggest challenges the senior care industry is facing right now.

In this guide, we'll offer insight on those challenges, as well as practical, actionable solutions you can use to effect long-lasting and positive change.

Challenge #1: High rates of illness transmission

A trend across senior care is that residents are entering facilities older, sicker and requiring much more care than in the past. That alone makes preventing infection and germ transmission critical priorities because the resident population is more vulnerable to viruses, bacteria, illness and disease.

While the high rates of airborne illnesses in senior care centers, such as the Flu and COVID-19, grab the headlines, the environment invites other serious risks, both for residents and staff, particularly around body fluid management.

The seemingly simple act of emptying bedpans, helping residents use the bathroom, washing residents and changing bed pads invite risk for numerous infections and illnesses, including C. diff, CRE, VRE, Norovirus and Hepatitis A.

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While gloves and other protective barriers help, gloves rip, accidents happen and splashes occur, often on caregivers who must keep moving onto the next resident.

To control transmission and reduce risk, it's critical to put the right procedures and controls into place. So, what can you do to reduce transmission? Avoid splashes.

While that may seem obvious, many facilities are using processes where splashing isn't just a possibility; it's inevitable. For example:

- **Using bedpans and urinals without absorbent pads.** As staff assist residents to eliminate and then clean up after them, there is a much greater risk of splashing without something to absorb the fluids.
- **Dumping bedpans in in-room toilets.** Even when staff is extremely careful, spills can happen on the floor, toilet or caregivers' clothing. If they're rinsing the bedpans using the hand shower or using rags or mops to clean up areas — even with disinfectant — bacteria and viruses can be missed and spread.
- **Locating bedpan washers in centralized locations.** When staff must carry the soiled equipment out of residents' rooms, they create too many opportunities for bacteria or viruses to be spread along the way. Additionally, most systems aren't designed to fully remove all pathogens.





Best practices for reducing illness transmission

- **Use disposable equipment and supplies.** Whenever possible, use pads, bags and other supplies that don't need to be washed or sanitized.
- **Eliminate the need to carry soiled materials from the bedside.** Enable staff to clean up and immediately dispose of any materials in a safe manner without having to go to other parts of the resident's room or facility.
- **Make it easy for staff.** How diligent staff is in preventing transmission is dependent on the individual's work ethic, how busy the person is, or how understaffed the facility is at any given moment. Make it incredibly easy for staff to safely and quickly clean up after residents and dispose of soiled items.

Challenge #2: Staffing shortages

Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. was facing a nursing shortage, with a deficit of over 900,000 nurses projected by 2030.¹

The pandemic is expected to increase the shortage. In fact, according to an analysis of government data released by the U.S. PIRG Education Fund², last year the number of skilled nursing facilities reporting a shortage of nurses, aides or doctors saw a concerning increase: 19.9% in May rising to 22.8% in December.

The job is already stressful, and understaffing compounds the stress, leading to high rates of fatigue and burnout among healthcare staff. Perhaps that's why, particularly in senior care facilities, the turnover rate is 50%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics³, and experts expect it to go higher.

While solving the cycle of turnover in senior care is complex and multifaceted, it's critical for leaders to take immediate steps to curb the exodus of talent from the industry.

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Best practices to help with staff turnover

- **Prioritize staff safety and health.** Your employees need to know that you are taking both their health, and the health of their loved ones seriously. Implement policy changes that reduce their exposure to illnesses and the risk of getting their families sick. That will be key to retaining them, but it also keeps them healthy, so you deal with fewer call-offs and unexpected absences which leave you short staffed.
- **Simplify their jobs.** While you may not be able to offer more money or perks, you can find ways to make the time they spend on the job better. For example, by making some of the less desirable aspects of their jobs, like dealing with bodily fluids, easier to manage.
- **Help to boost their overall productivity and efficiency.** When employees constantly feel like they are running behind, it takes a toll, and rushing through tasks almost always leads to mistakes. Integrate new strategies to streamline the work and help them to work faster, so they can accomplish more without rushing. Doing so also frees more of their time to complete the vital work of engaging with residents and improving their overall quality of care.

Challenge #3: Loss of trust

The past year has been particularly hard for residents and the family members they've been separated from. Both are dealing with mental and emotional damage. Many have lived in fear for more than a year, as nursing homes and other long-term care facilities became hot spots for COVID.

As a result, long-term care and senior facilities are facing an image problem. According to a [Kaiser Health Poll survey⁴](#), only 35% of people said that nursing homes are doing a "good job" serving consumers. And while 24% of consumers reported trust in long-term care facilities in 2015, that number declined to just 18% in 2020, according to [NRC Health⁵](#).

Many facilities will need to work to regain trust. Fortunately, everything we've discussed in this report, from upgrading processes to reduce illnesses to boosting staff job satisfaction, can be foundational to building that trust.

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Best practices to building back trust

- **Put measures into place to reduce illnesses.** The biggest step you can take to prove to residents and their loved ones that they can trust you to provide the highest quality of care is to implement new processes and invest in new products to prevent transmissible illnesses. Then educate them on the steps you are taking.
- **Protect residents' dignity.** Those moments when residents have soiled themselves or need to be bathed or assisted with elimination can be devastating mentally and emotionally. Enabling staff to more quickly, efficiently and gently complete those tasks reduces the embarrassment and helplessness residents can often feel. That can go a long way toward improving their mental health, which is vital to trust building.
- **Boost staff job satisfaction.** When healthcare workers are productive and efficient, they have more time to focus on residents' mental and emotional health. Even small productivity gains can make a big difference.

Keep patients and staff healthy with Hygie[®]

Hygie offers a full range of single-patient products for the handling and disposal of bodily fluids. With our products, staff can easily contain, replace and remove contaminated materials without ever leaving residents' rooms. With Hygie, you:

- Prevent splattering and cross-contamination
- Eliminate the need for cleaning bedpans, urinals and commodes
- Avoid the risk of illness transmission to other patients and staff
- Reduce staff response time significantly, boosting productivity and job satisfaction

Plus, Hygie is an economical alternative to the products you are currently using. We'll provide you with everything you need and automatically refresh your supplies on a recurring, scheduled basis, so you will always have essential stock on hand.



“In my opinion, Hygie provides exactly what my hospital needed: a safer method of removing liquids and organic solids. The envelope and bag system is a formidable technique that eliminates the potential dangers of splashing that accompany traditional handling. We bought the Hygie bedpans and commodes very much to our satisfaction. It was easy for the nurses, attendants and practitioners to get started. Since we’ve been using Hygie envelopes, there’s been less turnover and fewer complaints from staff.”

– Kimberly Presta, Infection Prevent and Control Advisor, William Osler Health Systems, Canada.

Talk to an expert at Hygie

Hygie is recommended by microbiologist-infectious physicians, nurses in infection prevention and control, hygienists, government authorities and scientific publications.

If you are ready to reduce illness transmission — and keep both staff and residents healthy, contact us at [Hygie.com](https://www.hygie.com) or at 1 (866) 588-2221.

1“ United States Registered Nurse Workforce Report Card and Shortage Forecast,” Stephen P Juraschek, Xiaoming Zhang, Vinoth Ranganathan, and Vernon W Lin, The American Journal of Medical Quality. September/October 2019: 473-481, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31479295/>

2“ Nursing Home Safety During Covid: Staff Shortages,” Teresa Murray, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, <https://connpirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/FINAL%201%3A28%20Nursing%20Home%20Report%20Staff%20Shortages.pdf>

3“ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Home Health and Personal Care Aides, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home-health-aides-and-personal-care-aides.htm>

4“ New Survey Examines the Public’s Views of Nursing Homes,” Kaiser Health Poll Survey, Elder Law Answers, <https://www.elderlawanswers.com/new-survey-examines-the-public39s-views-of-nursing-homes-4593>

5“ Answers from AHCA: What do consumers want out of long-term care?,” NRC Health, <https://nrchealth.com/answers-from-ahca-what-do-consumers-want-out-of-long-term-care/>



Hygie is committed to green production and invests in sustainable development. Using recycled materials, we manufacture recyclable products with no expiration date. Our packaging is also 100% recyclable.

