

Onboarding Program



Supervisor's Guide

(To be used by Administrator, Assistant Administrator, or House Manager)

Introduction

This guide has been developed for supervisors to support an effective and successful onboarding process for new employees. As a supervisor, it is your privilege and responsibility to welcome your new employees to The Cottages and to introduce them to the culture and values of our company.

The orientation process begins with your first phone call to the new employee and follows with your meeting on the first day. But an employee's initial impression of the job extends far beyond that first contact. What happens after the first day is referred to as the onboarding experience? The onboarding experience offers a better strategic approach for your new employee's success and provides the employee with a better sense of The Cottages and its culture.

Purpose

The Cottages strives to be the leader in the Assisted Living industry on training and retention of its employees. We strive to provide more on-going training and support for our employees than any of our competitors. We have a dedicated and highly-trained workforce, which results in exceptional resident care and allows us to live our mission statement "We Treat People Right." Our ultimate goal is to train a dedicated workforce who consistently provides exemplary resident care that focuses on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of our residents.

Role of Human Resource Department

The Human Resources function plays a vital role in building a strong foundation for new employees and presents a positive effect on their productivity, longevity, and morale. This includes ensuring a successful transition from the first day of employment through the employee's entire career with The Cottages. The Human Resource process is more than just the employee's required documents, such as new hire paperwork and benefits. Human Resources partners with the supervisors and mentors to coordinate and follow up on new employee onboarding.

If you have any questions regarding new employee orientation and on boarding, please ask your supervisor.

Role of the Supervisor

The responsibility for new employee onboarding and orientation rests with Human Resources, Operations, supervisor, mentor, and the new employee. The supervisor's role in getting the new employee off to a good start cannot be overemphasized, especially since the most important relationship within any organization is the one between the employee and the immediate supervisor. The relationship generally begins before orientation and is most important during the first few weeks and months of employment.

Some things to remember during orientation and onboarding:

- Be enthusiastic and engage the new employee.
- Work closely with Human Resources.

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- Be sure the employee attends an Orientation 1.0 event within the first 30 days of employment and the following Orientation 2.0 event after the first 6 months of employment.
- Help the new employee assimilate as quickly as possible.
- Provide guidance to ensure proper training and development.

Please know that this is not about giving you something more to do. You already have a heavy workload and juggle many projects, responsibilities, and priorities. Instead, its purpose is to provide you with a process to create a more engaging and effective experience for both you and your new employee--reducing employee turnover and creating a positive environment for your employees and residents to enjoy. This guide provides the tools and suggestions you need to implement a successful onboarding program. Remember, the more you put into the new employee, the less headaches and supervision will be required later. A thorough and proper onboarding process actually saves you time!

Orientation vs. Onboarding

Orientation may involve review and completion of necessary new hire paperwork, employee handbook, job description, initial training, and familiarizing the employee with The Cottages' structure, mission, and policies.

Onboarding is a much more comprehensive approach that starts before orientation and extends well beyond the first few days. In fact, the onboarding process will extend throughout the employee's first year of employment.

Onboarding is the process of bringing new employees into The Cottages and providing them with the tools, resources, training, and knowledge to become engaged, successful, and productive.

Why Onboarding

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, new employees decide within the first 30 days whether they feel welcome in their new jobs. Some employees leave their job because of a poor or non-existent onboarding program or a disastrous first experience. In addition, research by Gallup has shown that engaged employees are more productive employees. Gallup's findings suggest that engaged employees are more profitable, more customer-focused, safer, and more likely to withstand temptations to leave. Employees arrive at their new jobs excited and engaged. Your job, as their supervisor, is to channel that energy toward success by helping them become embedded in the organization. Onboarding will help you do that.

Effective employee onboarding will serve several purposes:

- The employees feel welcome, comfortable, prepared, and supported.
- These feelings increase the new employees' ability to make an impact and be productive within their role, provide excellent resident care in a positive atmosphere, both immediately and over time.
- The employee success leads to satisfaction and retention.

While onboarding is a yearlong process, the first 90 days are critical. *Let's get started!*

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Getting Started

Onboarding Checklist

During the first few days on the job, the goal is to ensure that each new employee understands the mission of The Cottages. “We Treat People Right” is not just a saying, it’s the standard we use each day at work in all that we do. This is also the time to communicate with the new employees regarding their job duties, responsibilities, and your expectations. You will assist the employee with integration into our organization and provide specific training on job duties. In addition to the two days of training, you will provide the employee with four hours of dementia training. The dementia training will include video training materials, follow up via written quiz, role play, and discussion to evaluate the employee’s understanding.

A checklist has been created to help you with each step involved as well as the timelines associated with each step. This checklist can be found on the e-binder. It is your responsibility to ensure that all these items are covered with your new employee.

Prior to New Employee’s Arrival

Prior to their first day of work, call each new employee to welcome them to The Cottages, verify their start date and time, confirm that they have all their paperwork and drug testing finished, and answer any questions they may have. This should be a friendly, welcoming, and brief conversation.

When possible, have the new employee’s name tag ready with a personalized, hand-written welcome card. Also, provide the new employee with a small notebook about the size of a recipe card. This notebook will be the employee’s “What I Need to Know” book. The purpose of the notebook is for the employee to write down the questions that comes to the employee’s mind to be addressed later.

Welcoming New Employees to Our Team

One of the best ways to help new employees get acclimated is to create a welcoming environment with their new team. Following are some ideas on how to do just that.

1. **Make the employee feel welcome.** At the next scheduled staff meeting, be sure to introduce and welcome the new employee. Then use some of the Get-To-Know-Me questions to assist the employee in having a fun, unintimidating conversation with the rest of the group.
2. **Establish a “New Employee Discussion Group.” ***OPTIONAL***** Schedule a time for new employees to get together with you or have another person facilitate the discussion. Ask the new employees to discuss their experiences, identify successes, describe moments of pride, express concern, ask questions, etc.
3. **Post a letter.** Prior to the new employee’s first day, post a letter to your team, introducing the new employee. The post could look like this:

Dear Team:

I’m pleased to announce that we have a new member of our team. NAME’S first day of work is DATE and s/he will be working primarily in building NUMBER. Please welcome NAME, TITLE to our team. Please introduce yourself and help him/her have a great first day.

Thank you!

YOUR NAME

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4. **After 30 days of employment, write a personalized note to the employee, expressing your appreciation for the new employee and extend another welcome to the team.**
5. **Think of your own idea.** Ask your team for ideas about what would have made them feel more welcome on their first day. Then involve them in creating the experience for the new employee.

Before the End of the First 30 and 60 Days on the Job

During the first 60 days, be sure to meet with new employees several times to review your expectations, their expectations, and their progress. Continue efforts to integrate the employees to your team. The first meeting should be after the first week of employment and continue meeting as scheduled on the Onboarding Checklist. During this time, supervisors should:

1. Discuss the employee's initial experience and how it matches their expectations. Ask:
 - a. How is your job going?
 - b. Is it what you expected when you were hired? How So?
 - c. Do you have all the work tools and resources you need? Be sure to provide any tools or resources the employee needs to do the work.
2. Discuss any concerns or issues the employee may have. Ask:
 - a. Is there anything you need that you don't have access to?
 - b. Are there any obstacles that may keep you from being productive and successful?
 - c. What are your questions about resident care? This is a great time to review the employee's "What I Need to Know" book.
 - d. Is there something you have found that you uniquely bring to your building?
3. At the 30-day and 60-day mark, establish an Individual Success Plan. Review the items the employee received training on during the three days of employment. Evaluate the employee's ability to perform each item. If you identify that additional training is needed, be sure to provide or schedule the training as soon as possible. This will help ensure that the employee is successful on each of their job duties.
4. Discuss and review dementia training videos.
5. Identify any upcoming training opportunities.
6. Answer any questions.

During these meetings, try to solicit feedback from the employees. Continue to explain how our mission statement affects each task that we do and each conversation that we have. Enlist the assistance of the employee's mentor in the meetings.

Before the End of the First 90 Days on the Job

The goal is to provide guidance and feedback to the new employee to ensure continued success and to make plans for future growth. During the first 90 days of employment, you will meet with the employee several times to:

1. Discuss experiences and how they match the employee's expectations.
2. Discuss any concerns or issues the employee may have.
3. At the 90-day mark, you will evaluate the employee's abilities on the Individual Success Plan. This will be the third ISP and should show the improvement and/or success in performing job duties. This is a time to look back at the 30- and 60-day ISP to see the growth and learning that has or has not taken place. This will help establish the areas that continued focus and work.

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4. Provide feedback on the employee's performance (performance review) to date and solicit feedback from the employee.
5. Answer any questions the employee may have.
6. Request feedback from the employee about the onboarding process and his/her suggested changes. (Provide this information to Human Resources.)

Setting Expectations and Responsibilities

Without question, you as the direct supervisor, are the most influential person in the onboarding process. You are key to the successful integration of your new employees into the organization. It is your role to work side-by-side with your new employees until they learn the ropes. Help them thrive during the critical transition period and your efforts will pay off.

Here are some ways you can help your new employee make a successful transition:

1. Be clear about your expectations from the beginning.

Even the most detailed job descriptions don't fully represent what the position entails, so be sure to share with new employees exactly what you expect of them.

- Review expectations point-by-point to ensure that each new employee understands them and is comfortable with them.
- Don't assume that new employees will know exactly what they have been hired to do. If they don't, they aren't likely to be comfortable asking.

2. Don't assume that because the employees are qualified for the job, they will have immediate success.

Just because new employees are well qualified doesn't mean they will easily and quickly take to their new roles. Every new employee will have strengths as well as opportunities for improvement. Someone who is well qualified probably has lots of experience at other companies. Ask yourself, "Why aren't they still there?"

- Give positive feedback on strengths and pay attention to opportunities to coach through weaknesses. Remember that some responsibilities may be new to the employee. Be sure to show compassion when discussing areas for improvement. It helps to remember what it was like when you were learning a skill as a new employee.
- Address a performance concern the *first time* it shows up as a learning opportunity. Again, do so as someone who is trying to help the employee be successful – not someone who is looking for mistakes.

3. Spell out important points about organizational and departmental goals, culture, and dynamics.

Be sure to cover "big picture" topics such as how your location is one of many and how all locations support The Cottages' mission statement. Answer the question "How do we all succeed?" Be realistic when sharing this information, and make sure you are positive and supportive of your co-workers, residents, resident families, vendors, and The Cottages as a whole.

- Do not assume new employees knows the basics even if they are coming from another assisted living or even from another location within the company.

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4. Help new employees develop their network.

Introduce new employees to those who they will interact with at their work. This can include co-workers, supervisors, residents, resident families, corporate office staff, vendors, home health workers, and the community at large.

- Make introductions.
- Have an open discussion about how each relationship in their professional network impacts their work and career.

5. Be positive and professional in all communication.

As an employee of The Cottages, everything the new employee says and does on the job reflects on the entire team and our company. Remind your staff that not only do we have a duty to our residents to have a positive living environment, but we are also obligated to follow HIPAA regulations. Keep in mind that a conversation held between staff members in a common area is likely to be overheard by others, and if the staff is discussing behavioral or medical information regarding a resident, it is not only a violation of HIPAA, but it is also not treating our residents with dignity. Hold confidential discussions quietly and in private. And keep all public discussions on a positive note, constantly aware that there are others who are listening to what you say.

6. Be honest about potential pitfalls and past mistakes.

We all need to learn from past mistakes. Inform new employees of common past mistakes. Be mindful that this is not an opportunity to “put someone down” for making a mistake. Instead, it is an opportunity for us to learn what the common mistake is and a process to make sure the mistake is not repeated. Help your employee understand not only the mistakes, but what makes your employee successful. Talk to your employee about possible obstacles to success (e.g., not meeting the resident’s needs, not greeting someone at the door) and the strategies to overcome them.

7. Hold regular discussions.

The “honeymoon period” can last anywhere from the first day to a year or longer, depending on the person. Hold regular meetings with each new employee often during the first 90 days of employment, then continue the meetings at least annually thereafter. (See suggestions listed in the “Before the End of First 30 and 90 Days” sections.)

- Find out what is going well and what is difficult for them.
- Ask what you can do to help them.
- Provide feedback on how you think they are doing.

8. Make coaching and mentoring resources available *before* there is a crisis.

Don’t wait until a new employee is in serious trouble before taking action. Address issues as they arise. Ensure the employee is connected with a mentor. Suggestions for a supervisor or mentor:

- Listen to what the employee is saying.
- Help the employee understand why something did not happen as expected.
- Talk about emotions employees may feel (anger, frustration, fear, etc.) and provide reassurance that these emotions are normal. Many times, these emotions are the result of feeling inadequately trained. Remind the new employees that when they feel these emotions, they need to reach out to you to discuss them.
- Offer helpful suggestions.

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Defining the Culture

The employee needs to have some understanding of the culture of The Cottages. This can be done via interactions with the assigned mentor, staff meetings, and social media, through our residents and their families and one another.

Culture can be defined as the beliefs, values, ethics, procedures, and atmosphere of a company. It is often expressed as “the way we do things around here” and ties in to the mission statement. The true culture of a company is what it “feels” like to work there.

Your role as Supervisor, especially during the new employee’s first year, is critical to retention and helping your new employee be successful by understanding our company’s culture. To prepare for a conversation about culture with a new employee, it may be helpful to ask yourself these questions:

- How would you describe your work environment (e.g., warm, friendly, busy, serious, fun, etc.)?
- What does The Cottages value the most (e.g., resident care, happy atmosphere, teamwork, meeting deadlines, etc.)?
- How are decisions made? Who is involved in decision-making?
- What does an employee need to be successful in the team?
- What lessons have you learned that you want to pass on to your new employee?
- What are the most important things that an employee should know about The Cottages?

Answering these questions for yourself may help you to provide a picture of the culture at The Cottages for new employees. Mentors can also help new employees with understanding and working in their new working environment.

The Role of the Mentor

As mentioned throughout this guide, transitioning into a new job can be stressful. Another way to smooth this transition is to assign a mentor to the new employee. A mentor is someone who partners with a new employee during the first six months of employment to offer advice and guidance in helping foster and promote the skill and professional development of a new employee.

A mentor should be a superior performer with strong people skills. The mentor knows the ropes and knows what actions to take to be successful in achieving our mission. The mentor is a source of advice and encouragement who can succeed in steering new employees in the right direction, as well as help to create and maintain a positive culture of excellence.

The mentor should be someone the new employee can trust. The mentor should create a comfortable environment in which the employee can ask and receive information about everyday procedures and policies that help to explain how things should work. A major goal of the mentor is to help establish a sense of belonging for the new employee.



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Managing Responsibilities

As the supervisor of the new employee, you have the most critical relationship. You may have heard the saying, “People don’t leave organizations; they leave leaders.” This guide has been created to help you successfully perform in the role of an effective leader. Part of your responsibility will be to select a mentor for the new employee. Some things to keep in mind when selecting a mentor:

1. Select a positive role model as a mentor.
2. Ensure the mentor has time to be accessible to the new employee.
3. Provide the mentor with the tools and resources needed to be effective in their role.
 - Review the Mentor Guide so that you are familiar with the mentor’s role and responsibilities.
4. Check in with the mentor regularly to ensure they have what they need to be successful.
 - At the end of the six months, ask for feedback on what went well and what might be needed to improve the program. Report that feedback to Human Resources.

Mentor Selection Criteria

Selecting a mentor is an important step in this process. Please consider this criterion when selecting a mentor:

- High performer in their current job.
- Positive role model.
- Understands the new employee’s job.
- Understands and implements The Cottages mission statement.
- Has patience and good communication skills.
- Has strong interpersonal skills.
- Shows interest in taking on the responsibilities of being a Mentor.

The Mentor will be an integral part of the new employee’s employment for six months or more, so it is important to choose this person carefully.

If you have any questions regarding this or any aspect of the onboarding process, please contact Human Resources.