

# A new digital process for combatting staffing pitfalls and helping schedulers

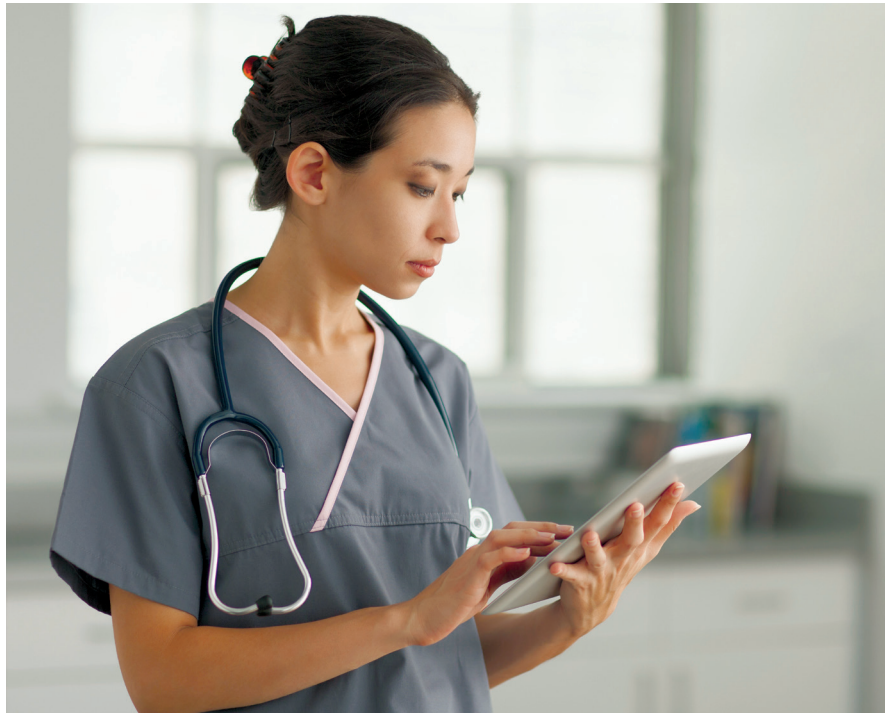
Uber-like system focuses on providing cost-effective and fully credentialed nurses

**E**very long-term care facility struggles with issues related to staffing at one point or another. For many operators, it can be an ongoing problem — one that leads to nurse burnout and employee turnover.

One option for dealing with short staffing is to use an agency to help pick up the slack, but this often comes with exorbitant cost mark-ups, an inability to truly control who shows up for the shift and a huge time commitment for the facility's staffing coordinator.

But what if there were a technology that could give facilities the resources and the people they need to address their staffing shortages while also providing peace of mind that patients are receiving quality care from credentialed long-term care staff?

"Traditional agencies thrive on chaos," says Keith Wicker, senior regional operations manager at ShiftKey LLC, a scheduling and credential management platform designed to intelligently match available nurses with facilities that need help. "With ShiftKey, facilities simply post the shifts they need filled, and eligible and credentialed caregivers can log



Nurses can select desired shifts with a few mouse clicks, day or night.

in at any time day or night and bid on those available shifts."

## Containing costs

When facilities use traditional staffing agencies, they often contend with agency fees and hidden costs like shift differentials, mileage and bonus pay to the provider, all leading to greater profit for the agency. While this model does help most shifts get filled — eventually the pay is so great that someone picks up the shift — many get filled last minute

because caregivers learn to wait in order to maximize their earning potential.

With ShiftKey, facilities pay only when they use the service, and there are no shift differentials, Wicker explains.

"Our goal is to come in and not have the facility pay any more than what it would pay its own people to work overtime, but also save them the often-overlooked cost of ongoing overtime, and losing people as a result of burn-out," Wicker says.



When using traditional staffing agencies, facilities are typically at the mercy of the agency in terms of who shows up for a shift, points out Susan McMillion, RN, CDON, CDP, IP, central division director of clinical services with LifeCare Centers of America.

With ShiftKey, however, facilities can review provider profiles and offer their own feedback after the caregiver's shift, indicating whether they would like the provider to return.

"If someone is great with the residents and works well with the team, facilities can 'green flag' them and comment on their performance," Wicker says. "The next time that provider bids on a shift, the facility will see the green flag and know that person is a winner, and select them for the next shift."

This helps provide continuity of care.

In the same respect, if a facility isn't happy with a provider's services, it can also be noted in the system, which can be a big help in the future.

"If there is ever a case where a ShiftKey contractor does not work out, you can click a button saying you were unhappy with their services and they do not return," McMillion says.

### Taking back control

While traditional agencies should be ensuring their providers have proper credentialing, liability for this ultimately falls on the facility. ShiftKey providers, however, are required to upload their qualifications into ShiftKey's credential monitoring system, which validates their training and tracks credential expiration, Wicker says.

"Once a provider's credentials expire, they aren't able to see shifts past that date," he says. "This ensures that even months after their shift, if the state conducts an audit, facilities can pull up the provider in the system to show the auditor they were compliant."

This feature certainly gives the nurse managers McMillion works with peace of mind and helps avoid the frustration of managing credentialing paperwork or working with non-credentialed contractors.

"This has really helped improve our managers' quality of life as they aren't constantly discussing scheduling problems," she says. "ShiftKey is like a professional family that understands the stressors of finding quality staff to assist in covering our shifts." ■

## Q & A WITH SHIFTKEY

### Aren't you just an agency that uses technology?

ShiftKey has different goals from a traditional agency, which exists to simply fill as many shifts as possible at the highest possible margin. We want to alleviate the stress and complexity of an understaffed facility by providing a tool that cost-effectively simplifies the process of finding and scheduling PRN staff.

Our wins don't come in times of chaos. Our wins come when we have facilities use our system to offset a staffing imbalance that we all know creates an environment of poor patient care and increased nurse burnout, and they are able to retain their current staff while taking the time to find the right hires.

### How do you accomplish this?

We want to stabilize the schedule to stop facilities from losing full-time workers. Since using ShiftKey is less than the cost of overtime, every shift that is filled not only saves money for the facility, it also preserves the quality of life for staff. Nurses aren't working to exhaustion, and on the chance a shift isn't covered, the facility can rely on their internal staff.

Once a facility covers its schedule without incurring any more cost than traditional overtime and has prevented an exodus by maintaining quality of life for staff, nurse managers can actually focus on hiring the right full-time employees, eventually eliminating the need for outside help.

### What are your biggest challenges?

Education! Regardless of the cost savings, someone at a facility or corporate office often will see the line item on their P&L and think they've spent too much money and pull the plug, removing us from a building without realizing that our rates are actually less than their own overtime.

### What's next?

Corporate integration has been vital in the evolution of our system. From staff retention, facility accountability, scheduling and compliance, we believe that by working closely with corporations, we can help revolutionize this industry.

To learn more, visit [www.shiftkey.com](http://www.shiftkey.com)