

Village Manor

of Heritage Village

705 North Brady St.
Abilene, KS 67410
(785) 263-1431
(785) 263-7407

To the Committee

My name is Andrew Sutter, RN/ED and I am the Executive Director of Village Manor in Abilene. Village Manor is a long term care unit, being owned by the local hospital, Memorial Health System of Abilene. The facility is currently licensed for 75 beds and we have been running a census of residents anywhere from 55-65 and on a normal basis employee roughly 125-130 employees. Being that this is the era of COVID-19 and staffing challenges nothing is normal and our employee numbers have dropped to around 85-90. This roughly 35% drop in staff has affected all areas of the facility but has impacted nursing the highest.

In the past we have used agency staffing to fill gaps in our facility nursing needs and we are currently using agency staff to fill openings. First of all I would like to state that I do believe that agency staffing is a vital need, but it should be for short periods of time. In its current status it is not designed to be a full time supplement to staff and long term care facilities are not able to sustain that kind of financial burden. We are one of the highest paying facilities in our area if not the highest. We start at or above \$15 an hour for CNA's. On top of this an employee also receives extra money for such things as shift and weekend differentials. Every agency we currently work with, working with 12 of them just to obtain enough staff to operate, is at a minimum double that in cost, plus mileage to and from our facility. It also goes up a minimum of \$25 an hour if an agency person is asked to work with a COVID-19 positive resident in my facility. I also have to provide all of the PPE required and testing when they enter my facility. There is no business, health care or not that would be able to survive a doubling, plus, in wages and survive for very long.

There is no way we can pass on the cost of this to our residents, state or federal government and long term care facilities are having to make very drastic decisions about how they are going to run and if they are going to be able to stay open. We have had to drop in the number of residents we can care for at our facility and discussion have been on going about having to drop further and to make other changes. We have also had to decline new admission related to uncertain staffing and being able to provide the quality care that each resident deserves and that we want to provide. It is really hard to say to a

person that we cannot care for your loved one at this time, especially when they are a local person. As a facility and I know that every facility out there would agree, we never want any local person that might be elderly having to drive to the next county to visit their spouse or parents in a nursing home. We have also had a large increase in the number of individuals, hospitals and private, inquiry about placement. The majority of them are from out of town and the common theme is that the facilities close to them are not taking residents at this time and lots of them say they are told it was due to staffing. We have even received calls from Nebraska, Missouri and Oklahoma looking for placement of residents. Now add in the closures that have already taken place and the facilities that have had to down size or are downsizing or not accept residents and it has turned into a recipe for disaster for the residents of Kansas.

As a long term care facility, we are held to very high standard by CMS and KDADS. Since we have been dealing with agency it is hit or miss on what each agency provides or does. There has been some instances that back ground checks were not done or they could not produce them for long periods of time. We have some agencies that will provide abuse neglect training and others that do not (we have initiated our own training for all agency entering just to be safe). This places us in a very dangerous position. I believe that they should be required to have the exact same requirements to employee, train and maintain a CNA that I we are to have.

As I have stated previously if this path continues we will have to look at some very serious changes in how we operate, hopefully still being able to, and the care we will be able to provide for the residents of Abilene and Dickinson County. Every day was a struggle for long term care facilities to begin with and COVID-19 stressed that to the limit but now the staffing struggle may be the final straw for many facilities.

Thank you sincerely for your time and willingness to listening

Andrew Sutter, RN/ED
Village Manor
Abilene, KS 67410
asutter@mhsks.org
785-263-1431

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