



Atlantic Specialty Care Uses New, Online Approach for Training CNAs

by Kellie Jimerson

Atlantic Specialty Care, located in Atlantic, Iowa, is a 90-bed skilled nursing facility providing skilled nursing, long term and hospice care to residents. We are part of Care Initiatives, Iowa's largest not-for-profit skilled nursing and long-term care provider. We are proud to be recipients of American Health Care Association's (AHCA) "Bronze" and "Silver" Commitment to Quality awards and the 2013 AHCA Quality Initiatives Award and 2017 Quality Initiatives Award.

Our nursing staff reflects our commitment to quality. In an effort to develop our own certified nursing assistant (CNA) staff, we had recently become certified to hold CNA classes in our building. Soon after holding our first class, Julie Adair, Vice President, Home Care & Workforce for Iowa Health Care Association, approached us with the opportunity to be a pilot program for a new, blended approach to train CNAs.

This new program, called CNAOnline.com, is powered through Academic Platforms, LLC and is offered in conjunction with the American Health Care Association (AHCA). The course provides online classes using the *How to Be a Nurse Assistant* curriculum, coupled with in person, clinical labs. We jumped at the chance to use this approach.

Why would we start something new when we could already host our own classes? What tends to happen when we run our own classes is we may have only one or two students at a time who are interested in taking the course. That means we have to expend time and expertise to train just a few people. Our sister buildings face the same issue. Plus, it's difficult for students to get through a six-week class when they have to sit in a classroom and take time away from their jobs.

With [CNAOnline.com's](http://CNAOnline.com) approach, we don't have to wait until we have five students in our building to hold the course. The course work is run by an independent instructor provided by CNAOnline.com and each student accesses the class using a tablet or smartphone on his or her own time. Only a few days are necessary for in person lab work. So each of our buildings may come up with one or two students and together we can reach five to 10 students. With our first class, we had five students in total including one for our building and four students from three other buildings from surrounding areas. We are proud of the fact that we had a 100 percent pass rate.

This was a great approach and worked well for us as well as the students. For example, if students had a part time job already, they were able to continue working while taking the online portion. When they came to the clinical time in the building, they were paid for that time. When they were certified, they were able to give up the lower paying job and able to jump right into the higher-paying certified job with us.

The staff at CNAOnline.com has an extremely user-friendly process, and they made it so easy for us because there was always somebody to help us every step of the way. Julie Adair, through Iowa Health Care Association, was also very helpful. Julie helped the facilities get certified to hold the clinicals in their buildings. She has the application process set up and can help any building that wants to provide training classes to get through that process.

I think we are seeing our younger generation of employees be more technology relatable, and online courses are the wave of the next generation. Younger students appreciate the ease of the online training rather than the onsite training. They are so used to their laptops. They really like the fact that they can do the online component on their own time and just come to our facility for the clinical component. We grouped the clinical components together to make it easier for students so they only had to come for two days of clinicals every two weeks.

To find students, we are running ads in the paper and on the radio. We are contacting the high schools and letting them know this program is fully paid and the students get paid for their time in clinicals. High school students can take the online portion at home and come to us for the clinical portion in the summer.

This is a great program for facilities who don't already have a CNA training program and don't know where to start. Rather than develop your own program, I recommend you use CNAOnline.com. If you are a stand-alone or part of a corporation or group of buildings that belongs to the same owner or in the same location of a bunch of facilities who needs help in finding nurse assistants, this program allows you to centralize efforts within one location.

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