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2012 White Paper Underscores Findings that Experienced Long Term Care Administrators Make Better Preceptors

WASHINGTON, DC—A recent white paper on the study of long term care has found that the quality of nursing home administrator-in-training (AIT) and practicum experiences are heavily determined by the environment in which the trainee learns, notably the experience of the trainee’s preceptor and the “spirit of learning” embodied by the practicum site. The study, supported by the Foundation of the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards, recommends increased focus on four areas of the learning environment in order to advance experiential learning within the field of long term care and help develop its future leaders.

“We expect the findings of this White Paper to facilitate a dialogue and subsequent actions to advance a more useful, systematic approach to site selections and future student placement,” stated Jennifer Johs-Artisensi, PhD, of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and co-author of the White Paper. “It is imperative that we develop high-impact practices to support the educating and training of a new generation of leaders in our field.”

Co-authors Drs. Johs-Artisensi and Douglas Olson, PhD, also of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, focus on four thematic areas in the study: preceptor characteristics, a strong learning environment, performance factors and site context descriptors. Following is a summary of their findings:

- Research has shown that the individual serving as the preceptor makes a significant difference in the student’s learning experience. The number of years the preceptor has been with the organization, the number of students he/she has mentored, how involved the preceptor is in the profession, and their level of education are all significant factors towards the student’s success.

- A positive learning environment, which refers to an environment that communicates that the student is wanted, accepted, and encouraged to engage with the work of the organization, encourages a climate of learning. The research points out that the stability of the department head team and the level of organizational support for employees and administrative interns to continue their own professional development were also important factors.
Conversely, instability among staff or leadership teams may serve as distractions to the preceptor and prevent student development. Of the findings in this area, culture change advancement, turnover, customer service, and participation in the Advancing Excellence Campaign all play a role in the student’s success.

Finally, students who were best prepared to lead long term care organizations of their own, obtained their education and training at sites where a variety of services, such as skilled nursing, assisted living, dementia care, senior housing, and other community based services were provided.

“Excellent education and training impact quality of care in a positive way,” said Randy Lindner, President and CEO, National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB), which helped support the white paper. “NAB has reviewed the recommendations in the White Paper and has begun identifying next steps for how we can begin establishing parameters for site and preceptor selection for this important clinical training experience.”

Other organizations that helped support the white paper included: The Commonwealth Fund, the Center for Health Administration and Aging Services Excellence (CHAASE), and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

The complete Paper can be found on the NAB Web site at www.nabweb.org.

About the Foundation of the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards

The Foundation of the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards (the “NAB Foundation”) is a nonprofit organization established to promote and enhance the profession of long term care administration to and on behalf of the organization’s members. The Foundation was also created for the purpose of promoting quality care and public protection for the disabled and frail elderly populations.

For more information, call Randy Lindner at (202) 712-9040, or visit www.nabweb.org.

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