
Sponsor: Social Services

Meeting Date: 11/16/2021

Title: Bonuses and Financial Incentives to Hire and Retain
Registered Nurses at the Ramsey County Care Center

File Number: 2021-465

Background and Rationale:

The [Ramsey County Care Center \(RCCC\)](https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/assistance/seniors/ramsey-county-care-center) <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/assistance/seniors/ramsey-county-care-center> is a nursing home facility that provides long-term and transitional care services. RCCC is a critical element of the healthcare continuum, creating patient choice for those leaving a higher level of care. RCCC is required, based on the case mix rating of each resident, to have a minimum staff to resident ratio. In the past, RCCC has contracted with temporary staff to meet the minimum staffing ratios and has also offered shift incentives when nursing staff pick up unscheduled shifts to cover nursing shortages.

Hiring and retaining nursing staff has been challenging in the past, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem as the availability of healthcare professionals has reached unprecedented shortages across the state and in the country. The long-term staffing shortage has impacted RCCC's intake, patient care and its ability to operate at full capacity. RCCC has not been at full capacity since March 2020.

With a full complement of Registered Nurse (RN) staffing, RCCC could serve as many as 135 individuals. RCCC currently has an ongoing shortage of six to ten nurses, and occupancy is capped at roughly 109 individuals. By limiting bed capacity, RCCC has had to turn away hospital referrals. During a six-day period ending in July 2021, the number of hospital Transitional Care Unit referrals that were turned away represented an estimated loss in monthly revenue of \$129,600. The current healthcare crisis and hospital referral patterns support an increase in nursing staff to ensure RCCC is operating at full capacity and is not losing revenue.

Over the last year, RCCC has sought to hire and maintain qualified nursing staff through direct hire, nursing pool agencies and website postings. In 2021, Human Resources supported RCCC administration in an application, review and interview process that resulted in 12 job offers and zero hires. While the RCCC RN pay range may be in line with other organizations, many have added incentives or reach past salary mid-range to compete in the current market. On August 12, 2021, there were over 2,500 jobs for RNs within 25 miles of St. Paul posted online. The *Indeed.com* job search website revealed that Long-Term Care, Transitional Care Facilities, Home Health Care, Hospitals and RN Staffing agencies were offering hiring incentives including sign-on bonuses ranging from \$6,000 to \$20,000, as well as weekend and on-call differentials, and pick-up shift incentives ranging from \$4 to \$10 per hour for nurses.

RCCC administration recommends the following financial incentives to hire and retain RNs in the current, very competitive market be offered applicable through 2022 with the option of continuing in 2023 based on increased revenue:

1. Offer RNs a "Sign-on Bonus" of up to \$8,000 paid out over 2 years as follows:

- a. Upon Hire: \$1,000
 - b. 6 months: \$1,500
 - c. 1 year: \$2,000
 - d. 2 years: \$3,500
2. Offer a referral bonus for all RCCC employees who source the successful hiring of RNs up to \$1,000 paid as follows upon agreement between the Union and Employer as outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement:
- a. 6 months: \$500
 - b. 1 year: \$500
3. Offer an incentive for unscheduled shifts picked up as follows:
- a. RNs (excludes temporary and Licensed Practical Nurses) paid a \$5.00 per hour differential (\$40 for 8-hour shift) for unscheduled shifts picked up when the employee works an open shift in addition to their regular schedule at the request of RCCC Administration, Director of Nursing, or Designated Authority.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

- 1. Direct the County Manager to develop and communicate to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners a short-term plan that is focused on serving current residents without a concern for increasing census to maximize revenue during the current COVID-19 wave of increased transmission and human impact.
- 2. Direct the County Manager to develop long-term recommendations, to be presented to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners in a workshop during the first quarter of 2022, regarding Care Center operations beyond the short-term plan to managing through the current COVID-19 wave of increased transmission.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McDonough, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 

 Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board