



Pioneer Network™

SHARING RESOURCES

Remember the Often-Forgotten Workers in Long-Term Care

Reflections from Joanne Rader, Co-Founder of Pioneer Network, Consultant

It is encouraging and uplifting at this time of crisis to see the many ways the nation has rallied to support hospital workers. Food, lodging, praise and recognition for their courage and sacrifice are offered, whole communities gather to cheer them at the change of shifts and rightly so. Please let us also remember the often overlooked workers who are taking care of our very most vulnerable, the elders who live in care settings, such as assisted living and nursing homes. They are working long hours, under stressful conditions to try to keep their residents, your spouses, parents and grandparents safe from COVID-19 and out of the hospital. In addition, they are acting as surrogate family and working to keep families connected when visits are prohibited. They are committed to their work of protecting others, often putting themselves and their families in harm's way.

Many direct care workers are single parents who have limited time, money, support and energy to deal with this crisis. Most Americans feel helpless and are looking for local, meaningful ways to be of service. Helping your local care setting is one way. I encourage communities to reach out to these settings and ask how they could be supportive.

What are some ways for communities and individuals to support long-term care at this time?

One thought is to arrange for restaurants to deliver meals not only for when they are on shift, but perhaps provide a meal that they can take home to their families. This could be done through "Go Fund Me" or other means, where people can contribute. This would help to also support local restaurants and their workers. Other areas where support systems could be created are with childcare, laundry and transportation. Here are some thoughts. Please add your own ideas or actions:

- Are there ways to provide help with laundering their work clothes?
- Set up a fund for transportation to and from work (e.g., Uber, Lyft) since some bus lines have been shut down
- Donate extra Ipads to be used to create connections to families

- Make signs and stand in front of a care setting saying thank you etc.
- Develop creative ways to keep families informed while visits are limited, so precious staff time is not duplicated with each family

Let's continue to express our gratitude by reaching out in your community to some of the most giving, caring and vulnerable staff, those working each day to provide direct care to residents in long-term care.