

## In the trenches: Front line workers' burnout experience in long term care settings in the COVID-19 pandemic

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### Objective/Issue

Burnout is a well-known and longtime issue originating from various reasons leading to negative consequences such as depression and anxiety among the workers and lower quality of care in both acute and long-term care. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged long-term care facilities where underpaid yet essential frontline workers work. The experiences regarding the impact of COVID-19 on frontline workers' work have not been heard at the same level compared to workers in the acute care sector. The purpose of this study was to describe frontline workers' experiences at the beginning of the pandemic and identify strategies to support them.

### Data/Setting

Data were collected through semi-structured phone interviews from nine (9) eligible participants in California, Texas, Florida, and New York working in a long-term care facility.

### Design/Methods

The study design followed a qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis.

### Results/Findings

Three overarching themes impacting frontline workers' experiences and feelings about burnout were identified: COVID-19 impact on the work environment, material resources provided, and COVID-19 effects on the worker. Participants experienced heightened burnout and disrespect due to increased workload, frequent policy changes, and unevenly provided material resources such as bonuses, hazard pay, and personal protective equipment. In contrast, the support that communities and organizations offered for the workers seemed to minimize the feelings of burnout. Moreover, frontline workers experienced a lack of professional respect, increased emotional burden, and exhaustion due to the impact of COVID-19.

### Conclusions/Discussion

COVID-19 has been a significant stressor in the long-term care sector and has negatively impacted essential frontline workers' working environment and themselves. Yet, the needed support to ease out the consequences of a pandemic has varied depending on geographical location and facility. The long-term care sector should focus on changing the image of long-term care and the prevailing worker hierarchy through staffing- and training /education policies and leadership. Long-term care organizations should consider frontline workers' overall well-being by ensuring appropriate resources (e.g., funds for salaries and emotional support).

### Related Resources

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### **Key Words**

Front-line worker, burnout, COVID-19, nursing home, long-term care, certified nursing assistant

### **Full Report**

<https://healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/staff-turnover-home-health>