

A Profile of Nursing Assistants **Employed in Central Texas Nursing Homes**

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A PROFILE OF NURSING ASSISTANTS EMPLOYED IN CENTRAL TEXAS NURSING HOMES

Nursing assistants in central Texas offer candid answers to questions about themselves, their feelings, and the care they provide.

According to providers and workers, the biggest problem in Texas nursing homes involves the constant turnover of staff, in general, and of nursing assistants, in particular. Without continuity of nursing staff, the quality of life for nursing homes residents suffers greatly. In order to address this problem, we felt compelled to ask the people who might be able to most readily shed some light on the reasons for this “revolving door” effect, the nursing assistants themselves.

In July of this year packets of questionnaires were mailed with an explanatory letter for administrators to all nursing homes in a twelve county area in central Texas. Counties which were included in the study are: Atascosa, Bastrop, Bexar, Caldwell, Comal, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hays, Lee, Travis, Williamson, and Wilson. Responses were received from thirty-five nursing homes (out of a total of one hundred and twenty seven) for a response rate of 27.5%. Five hundred and thirteen individual nursing assistants responded. A “mini-profile” of the facilities that responded follows these trends:

- 1) Twenty-two percent of the urban homes responded, while 33.3% of the rural homes answered.
- 2) Of the homes with less than 100 beds, 30.5% responded; of the homes with 100 to 200 beds, 33.3% responded; of the homes with over 200 beds, 8.6% returned questionnaires.
- 3) Facilities were grouped into four major categories: corporate managed, proprietary, church affiliated, and government or community organized. Response rates were:

Facility Management Category	Response Rate
Proprietary	15.6%
Government/Community	0 responses
Corporate Management	32.9
Church Affiliated	40%

The questionnaire consisted of forty questions. Some of these were demographic in nature. Others asked for opinions, feelings, and perceptions about the daily working life of a nursing assistant. Many of the responses were expected; others were somewhat surprising.

The most significant finding discovered while coding and analyzing the data is that the people who are providing the basic care for nursing home residents in Texas are working in long term care facilities because they love their clients. In spite of many barriers, the nursing assistants who responded are working in nursing homes because that is where they want to be.

Demographically, the respondents were relatively young. Almost forty percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, while a full seventy percent were under forty. This is not surprising, as the physical demands of the position are quite high. Seventy-three percent of the respondents have children. The average number of children is 2.62, and the mean age is eleven. Almost sixty percent of the respondents are either single, divorced, or widowed. This places the majority of nursing assistants in this study in a single-mother category.

The average educational level attained was eleventh grade. However, over sixty-five percent are high school graduates, and almost fifteen percent have completed some college work. Nine people had college degrees.

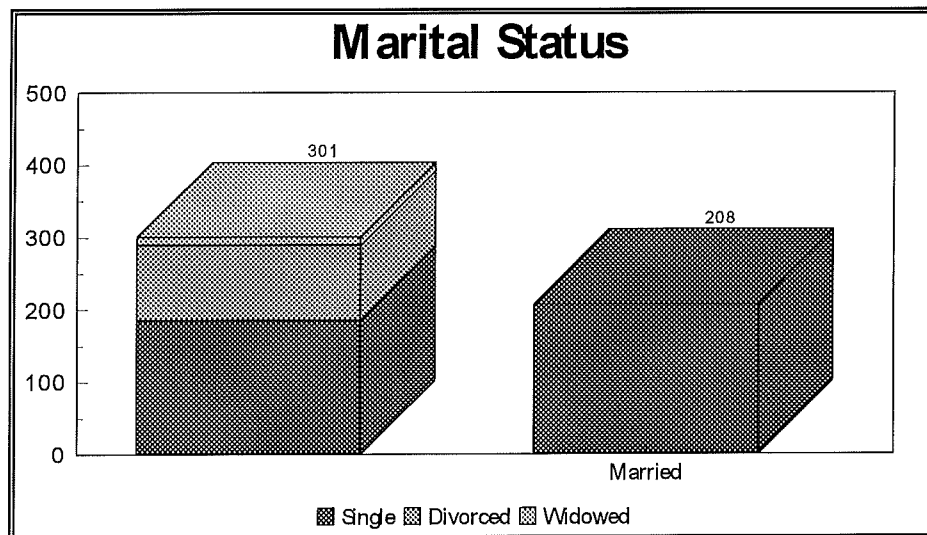
The average length of time the individuals had worked as a nursing assistant was approximately five and one-half years. Thirty percent had worked less than one year. Historically, the greatest attrition of nursing assistants occurs within the first year after training.

The majority of the information obtained from this survey is presented graphically in the following pages. Some of the responses were so poignant and direct that they are quoted as they were written.

Basic Demographics

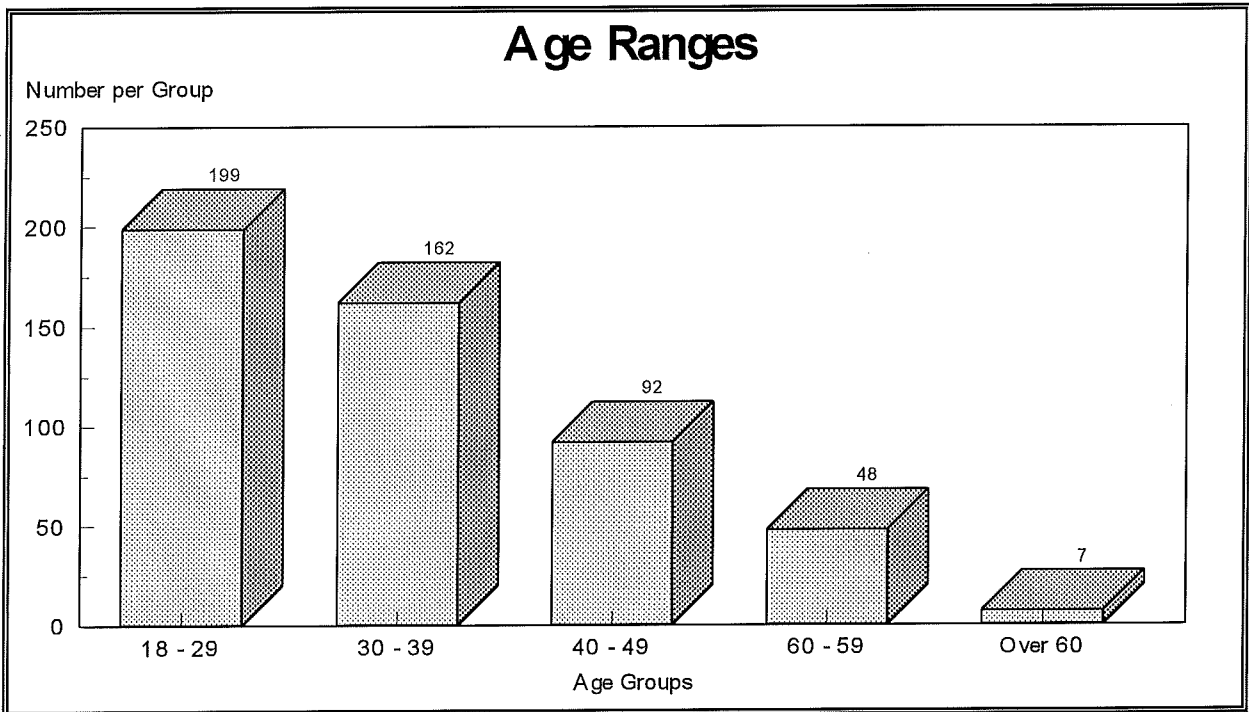
	Average	Range
Number of children	2.62	None to 8
Ages of children	11 years old	Under 1 year to over 20 years
Travel time to work	21.5 minutes	Two minutes to 2½ hours
Educational level	11.06 years	Fourth grade to college graduate
Length of time as nursing assistant	5.55 years	One month to 40 years
Length of time at present facility	2.43 years	One month to 38 years
Number of homes worked in	2.62	1 to 15
Hourly wage	\$4.95	\$2.25 to \$10.30
Believe a fair wage would be	\$6.67	\$4.75 to \$15.00
Number of residents cared for*	17	1 to 48

* Some respondents answered that they care for fifty to seventy residents. In light of some of the other answers by these same people, we concluded that they are medication aides. Their responses to this question were not included in the computations.



	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed
Marital Status	40.9%	36.3%	20.4%	2.4%

	18 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	Over 60
Age group	39.2%	31.9%	18.1%	9.4%	1.4%



	Childcare Center	Relative/Friend	Sitter
Who cares for children	11%	77%	12%

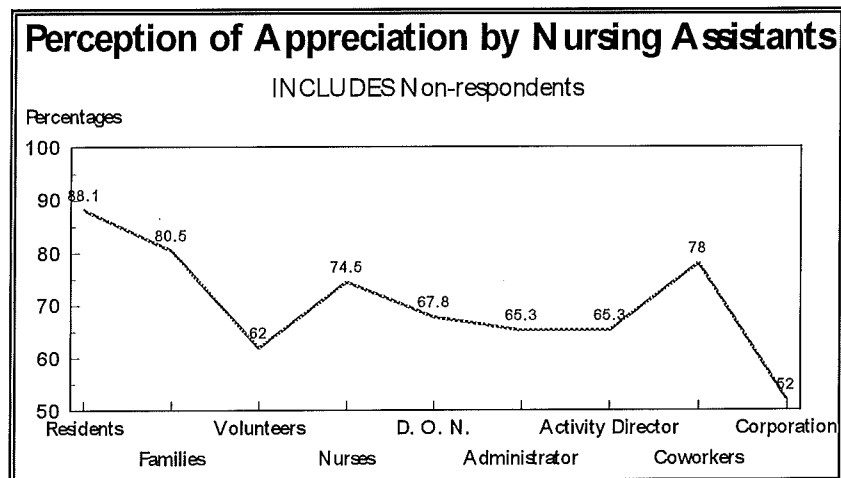
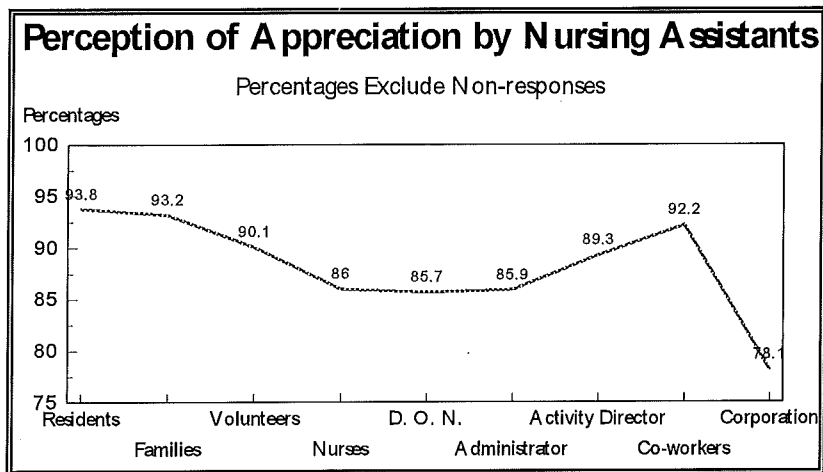
	Own Car	Carpool	Bus	Other
Transportation	71.3%	4.3%	8.1%	16.35%

	Days	Evenings	Nights	Combination
Shift Worked	50.5	32.0	12.0	3

Opinions and Feelings

	YES	NO	Unsure or No answer
Are you a certified nursing assistant?	92%	6.8%	1.2%
Do you feel your wage is fair for the work you do?	13.8%	79.5%	6.6%
Do you feel that your orientation to this facility was adequate?	72.5%	14.8%	10.9%
Were you treated well by the staff when you first started this job?	87.9%	8.2%	3.9%
Do you feel the training at your facility is adequate?	84%	6.8%	9.1%
Do you feel appreciated by the residents?	88.1%	5.8%	6%
Do you feel appreciated by the families?	80.5%	5.8%	13.6%
Do you feel appreciated by the volunteers?	62%	6.8%	31.2%
Do you feel appreciated by the nurses?	74.5%	12.1%	13.5%
Do you feel appreciated by the DON?	67.8%	11.3%	20.9%
Do you feel appreciated by the administrator?	65.3%	10.7%	24.0%
Do you feel appreciated by the activity director?	65.3%	7.8%	26.9%
Do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?	78%	6.6%	15.4%
Do you feel appreciated by the corporation?	52%	14.6%	33.3%

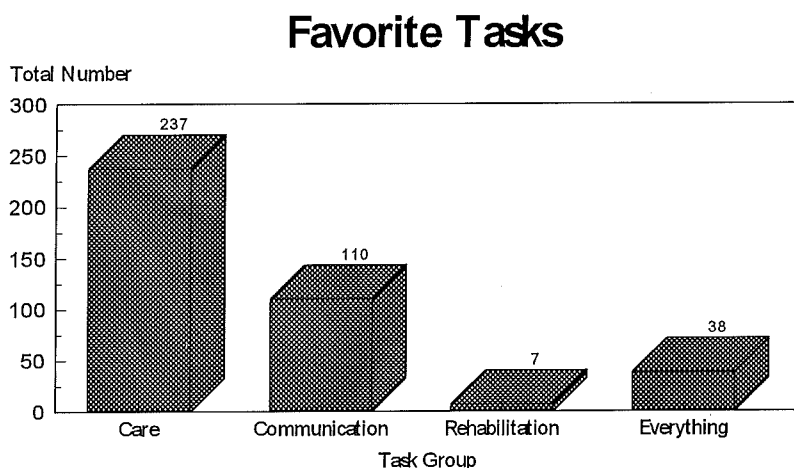
The following two graphs display how much aides felt appreciated by various groups of people at their workplace. Both graphs are presented, because the fact that many people chose not to respond to some of these categories significantly alters the picture. In either case, it appears that nursing assistants feel less appreciated by administration (at the facility and corporate levels) than they do by others. The difference in the two graphs in respect to volunteers may have more to do with lack of volunteerism in individual facilities than in aide/volunteer relationships.



The remaining questions were answered with such a variety of responses that answers were grouped by general categories for analytical purposes. The categories are explained with each question below. Graphs are presented along with some of the actual comments are given as they were written.

Which tasks that you perform as a nursing assistant do you enjoy the most?

The general categories for the answers to this question fell into four main categories: physical care of the residents, communication with the residents, rehabilitation of the residents, and everything.

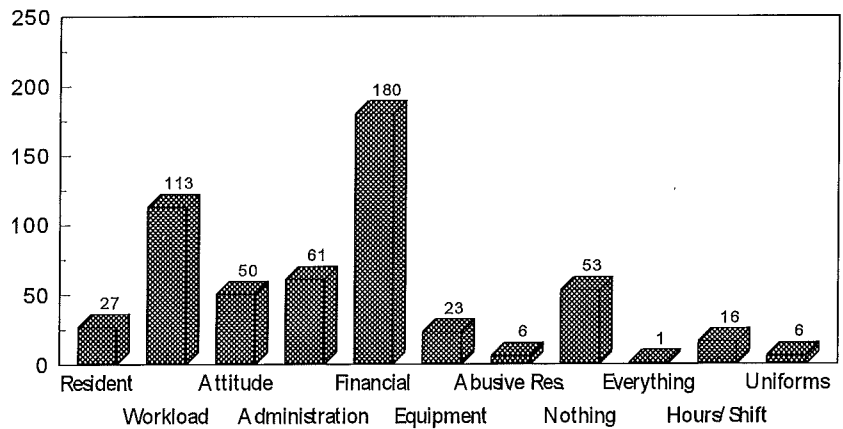


- “when someone is very sick - to see a smile when they feel better”
- “caring and cheering them up and making them HAPPY”
- “listening to the residents tales of the day or tales of woe, as the case may be”
- “making residents feel needed”
- “the funny things some of the residents say”
- “knowing that we are trying our best to make then feel special and encourage them that soon they will be going home”

If you could change anything about your job, what would it be?

The general categories for the answers to this question were: aspects of resident care, nothing, workload, attitudes of staff, attitudes and practices of administration, pay and benefits, changes in equipment and supply availability, abusive residents, hours worked or shift, uniforms, and everything.

What Would I Most Like To Change



“less pressure, more pay, LVNs could be more respectful”

“would like the LVNs to respect you for a person - not something off the street”

“more supplies, more help, and please do something about it”

“get more staff and never be short again”

“more help, more knowledgeable people; people willing to work”

“to have more nursing hands on with patients, not to be called an aide, but a nursing assistant”

“that my residents wouldn't have to suffer”

“nothing, it is wonderful”

“I would like a full staff that we can depend on to be at work on time and to do their work.”

“the way the other aides talk to and about the residents, the gossip, other aides using personal care products on everyone and not just the person it belongs to”

“have all the LVNs get on the floor and help when it is short”

“to be paid more. As an aide I work my behind off and would make just as much as LVNs for sitting around doing nothing and giving orders. If family members can see it, so should everyone else.”

“I would try to make each resident feel special and in a way that they feel confident and enjoy life. Take the time to talk to them and listen to them when they have something to say even though one thinks it is not important to them.”

“rain boots for the shower ‘cause we go through a lot of shoes”

“honest wages”

“more pay!!!! better benefits!!!! more help!!!!”

“to try to make everyone of these residents to feel better and look forward to better and brighter days”

“if we could have a lounge or some place to take our break”

“that the ...Center had their own ‘employee of the month’. It’s always someone from the Manor that gets ‘employee of the month’ and that makes us feel like we are not important.”

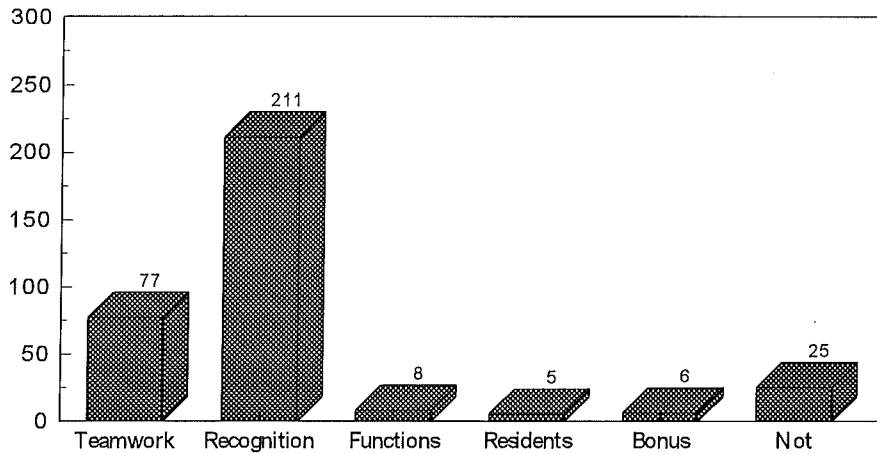
“just that so many people need to come to work more often. But when they are here everyone works very well and hard workers. They take pride in what they do. Thank you for your interest about our job.”

“the pain of death”

Please share with us some of the things that people at work do to make you feel appreciated.

The general categories for which people felt appreciated were: working as part of a team, the residents, recognition and interpersonal skills, special function, bonuses, and did not feel appreciated.

What Makes Me Feel Appreciated



“after a long hard working day, everyone acknowledges each other with ‘a thank-you’ ”.

“always looked at as an individual that is a supportive and valued employee”

“thank you or a hug from a resident”

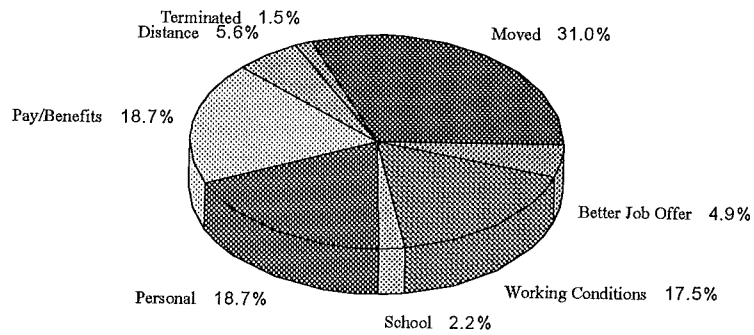
“just by talking to you decently and telling you , you are appreciated”

“the lack of communications between shifts, and allowing the higher-ups to see the great jobs that we do. (Working midnights no one sees our efforts except the residents)”

“explaining work details with you before the shift begins”

“when a resident looks nicely dressed and feels good about themselves”

Reason Left Last Nursing Home



“because the care of the patients weren’t right and some of the attitudes of coworkers”

“It was an unstable nursing home. They went through six DONs in five months.”