WALA
WISCONSIN ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION

THE STAY CONVERSATION GUIDE

Five questions to understand why employees stay and what could make their experience better.



WHY HAVE A STAY CONVERSATION

When an employee leaves, we often ask why. What if we asked some of those questions while they are still a part of our team? A stay conversation helps uncover what employees value, what challenges they face, and how leaders can better support them.

Keep it simple: Use all five questions in a dedicated check-in, or choose one or two regular conversations. Find a private setting and make it clear this is not a performance review.

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION

"I wanted to check in and hear how things are going. This is not a performance review. I would like to understand what you enjoy about working here, what challenges you are experiencing, and what we might be able to do better."

FIVE QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

1. **What keeps you working here?**
   Discover what employees value: residents, teammates, flexibility, purpose, or something else.

2. **What is making your job harder than it needs to be?**
   Uncover obstacles, frustrations, or processes that might be improved.

3. **Do you feel supported in your role? What could we do differently?**
   Explore training, communication, resources, and supervisor support.

4. **Are there skills you would like to develop or opportunities you would like to explore?**
   Learn about interests, growth, mentoring, and responsibilities.

5. **What is one thing that would make you more likely to stay here long-term?**
   Invite a concrete suggestion without promising every requested change.



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MAKING THE CONVERSATION COUNT

Asking is the first step. Listening and following through build trust.

BEFORE, DURING & AFTER

Before – Set the stage
Choose a comfortable, private setting. Explain the purpose and allow time to talk without rushing.

During – Listen with an open mind
Avoid interrupting or becoming defensive. Ask clarifying questions. Do not promise changes you cannot make.

After – Follow through
Identify one or two realistic next steps. Communicate what is possible, and check back with the employee.

Close the loop

- What I heard: Summarize the employee's feedback.
- What I can do: Share any actions you can take.
- What I'll follow up on: Explain what needs further consideration and when you'll reconnect.

TURN THE CONVERSATION INTO ACTION

One thing I learned:

One action I can take or explore:

When I will follow up:

Remember:
Employees may not expect every concern to be resolved, but they should know their feedback was heard. Keep employee-specific notes private and follow your organization's policies for sensitive concerns.

The goal is not to have all the answers. It is to create a workplace where employees feel comfortable sharing their experiences and know someone is listening.