Ziegler Link·age Funds

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ziegler Link•age Funds and Link•age Connect Release New Research on the Evolving Role of Directors of Nursing in Senior Living

Inaugural PULSE: Signal report highlights the experiences of nursing leaders and actionable opportunities for providers to strengthen organizational support and resident care.

CHICAGO, IL – NOVEMBER 10, 2026 – Ziegler Link•age Funds, the growth-oriented innovation funds focused on older adults and post-acute care, in partnership with Link•age Connect, a specialized market research and insights organization focused on the aging market, announced the release of *Senior Living Directors of Nursing: The Balancing Act Behind Great Care*, a report that examines how DONs are navigating an expanding role and where providers can help.

The report marks the inaugural publication in *PULSE: Signal*, a new research series designed to to elevate the voices of professionals working closest to day-to-day operations, staff, and residents, translating their experiences into meaningful insights that inform senior living innovation, organizational strategy, and better business decisions.

Drawing on survey responses from nearly 90 Directors of Nursing, complemented by individual interviews and facilitated roundtable discussions, the research examines the evolving responsibilities of clinical leaders across senior living and care organizations, with an emphasis on life plan communities.

"Directors of Nursing play an essential role in the success of senior living communities, yet their perspectives are not always represented in broader industry discussions about operations, technology, and innovation," said Katie Schmitz, Managing Director and Practice Head of Ziegler Link•age Funds. "This research provides an opportunity to hear directly from these leaders and better understand the demands of their evolving roles."

As senior living providers navigate workforce challenges, increasing resident acuity, heavy regulatory requirements, and growing operational complexity, the responsibilities of Directors of Nursing have expanded well beyond traditional clinical leadership. The research explores how DONs are balancing these growing demands while maintaining their commitment to quality resident care, supporting their teams, and leading clinical operations. It also examines opportunities for providers to strengthen the resources and organizational support surrounding this essential leadership role.

Importantly, the report goes beyond identifying challenges to offer practical, actionable recommendations for providers. These include strengthening operational and administrative support, investing in clinical leadership development, protecting time for clinical responsibilities, improving technology integration and workflows, and addressing burnout before it contributes to turnover.

Key findings from the research include:

- **Workforce challenges remain a top concern.** More than 70% of respondents identified recruitment and retention as a significant challenge, with DONs devoting considerable time to hiring, onboarding, and scheduling alongside their clinical leadership responsibilities.
- **Administrative responsibilities consume significant time.** Nearly half (46%) reported spending more than 60% of their typical workweek on administrative and non-clinical responsibilities, limiting time available for clinical oversight, mentoring, and resident engagement.
- **Technology presents both challenges and opportunities.** Satisfaction with existing technology averaged 3.2 out of 5, with respondents highlighting disconnected systems and redundant documentation as challenges, leaving open opportunities for improved integration and usability.
- **Nursing leaders are navigating sustained demands.** More than 60% reported feeling overwhelmed, stretched too thin, or working beyond scheduled hours often or almost always, highlighting the importance of sustainable support structures.
- **Commitment and optimism remain strong.** Despite these pressures, respondents reported an average optimism score of 66.9 out of 100, and approximately 60% indicated feeling highly supported by executive leadership.

The research also identifies five opportunities for providers to strengthen the Director of Nursing role, with recommendations centered on building stronger operational infrastructure, expanding clinical leadership capacity, protecting clinical time, designing technology around workflows, and proactively addressing burnout.

While many Directors of Nursing reported positive relationships with executive leadership, the findings suggest opportunities to build on those relationships through greater alignment of responsibilities, resources, and organizational support.

"Meaningful insights begin by listening to the people closest to the challenges," said Sue Viox, Executive Director at Link•age Connect. "Our goal was not simply to highlight the challenges Directors of Nursing face, but to translate their experiences into actionable recommendations that help organizations strengthen clinical leadership, improve operational support, and ultimately enhance resident care."

The inaugural *PULSE: Signal* report serves as a resource for senior living executives, clinical leaders, governing boards, and industry partners seeking to better understand the evolving Director of Nursing role and identify strategies to strengthen workforce performance, clinical leadership, and resident care.

By bringing nursing leaders' firsthand experiences into broader industry conversations, Ziegler Link•age Funds and Link•age Connect hope to encourage continued collaboration and support clinical leaders across senior living and care.

We invite you to **download the full report** to explore the findings, firsthand perspectives, and actionable recommendations.

About Ziegler Link•age Funds

Ziegler Link•age Funds invests in innovative technology and services companies improving the lives of older adults and those who love and care for them – connecting capital, expertise, and a community of senior living, healthcare providers, and payors to transform aging. The Funds offer a combination of financial expertise and deep aging sector specialization that no other fund can replicate.

About Link•age Connect

Link•age Connect provides specialized market research and advisory services focused on the aging market. Through direct engagement with older adults, caregivers, and senior living professionals, Connect delivers meaningful insights that help organizations identify opportunities, improve products and services, and make smarter business decisions.

Certain comments in this news release represent forward-looking statements made pursuant to the provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. This client's experience may not be representative of the experience of other clients, nor is it indicative of future performance or success. The forward-looking statements are subject to a number of risks and uncertainties, in particular, the overall financial health of the securities industry, the strength of the healthcare sector of the U.S. economy and the municipal securities marketplace, the ability of the Company to underwrite and distribute securities, the market value of mutual fund portfolios and separate account portfolios advised by the Company, the volume of sales by its retail brokers, the outcome of pending litigation, and the ability to attract and retain qualified employees.

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