



A comprehensive approach to increasing nurse retention

NYC Health + Hospitals implemented a large-scale nurse residency program to reduce turnover, improve transition to practice and support first-year nurses

High resignation rates among first-year nurses are a prevalent issue in health systems and facilities—and a constant source of stress for healthcare administrators. For NYC Health + Hospitals, that universal challenge is compounded by the health system's status as a safety net provider that serves uninsured populations, racial and ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community and a patient population that speaks more than 100 different languages.

NYC Health + Hospitals employs nearly 10,000 nurses throughout its vast system of 11 acute-care hospitals, post-acute care facilities and services, federally qualified health centers, correctional facilities and more. About 54% of those nurses turned over each year, including nurses in their first year of practice.

CASE STUDY

NYC Health + Hospitals



To help stem the staff losses, NYC Health + Hospitals partnered with Vizient™. The partnership—sponsored by the New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (NYACH) as part of its 28-hospital Citywide Nurse Residency Program consortium—aimed to meet the challenge by using nursing leadership to implement a large-scale residency program with the Vizient/AACN™ Nurse Residency Program (NRP).

Identifying opportunities in transition to practice

Physicians graduate from medical school to internships, residencies and fellowships. Allied healthcare professionals from pharmacists to physical therapists have similar programs. Although the nursing transition to practice process begins with nursing orientation, research and practical experience have found that orientation alone does not provide the support that new nurses need to grow and thrive in their new positions.

The threshold question was: Why, after a lengthy training period, were first-year nurses leaving NYC Health + Hospitals? Exit interviews with the nurses—along with other internal research—pointed to two primary reasons: a lack of clinical support and a lack of emotional support.



The power of partnership

Through a partnership with Vizient and NYACH launched in 2018, NYC Health + Hospitals joined a consortium of 28 hospitals citywide that were addressing retention problems and other workforce challenges by implementing nurse residency programs founded on a 12-month curriculum from Vizient.

“NYACH and city government wanted to ensure that almost any new nursing graduate entering the workforce in New York City would be given the opportunity to participate in a residency program, to ensure these new nurses would be best positioned for success,” explains Joe Rhoades, NYACH’s deputy director. “In that effort, NYACH did extensive outreach to share the proven value of the Vizient/AACN curriculum and brought hospitals across the city into the consortium.”

NYACH covers the fees associated with the NRP curriculum and convenes participating hospitals to learn from one another and collaborate on unique local challenges. Vizient provides the program curriculum, tools and advisory support, while NYC Health + Hospitals coordinates and manages the program throughout its system. “Having NYACH provide the funding support for this program was a significant and meaningful benefit to our system,” says Natalia Cineas, senior vice president and chief nursing executive for NYC Health + Hospitals. “As a public safety-net health care organization, additional resources and investments that can bolster our workforce are welcomed and appreciated.”

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Striving for success

Initially, only about 30 of the 1,000 nurses hired each year participated in the health system's residency program. With such a small cohort, the system was missing a big opportunity to reach more nurses. "The fact that our residency program was only running one cohort of about 30 nurses was a big mismatch to the opportunity we had to retain 90% of the 1,000 that we hired," explains Albert Belaro, DNP, RN, senior director, professional practice and education, and NRP coordinator for NYC Health + Hospitals.

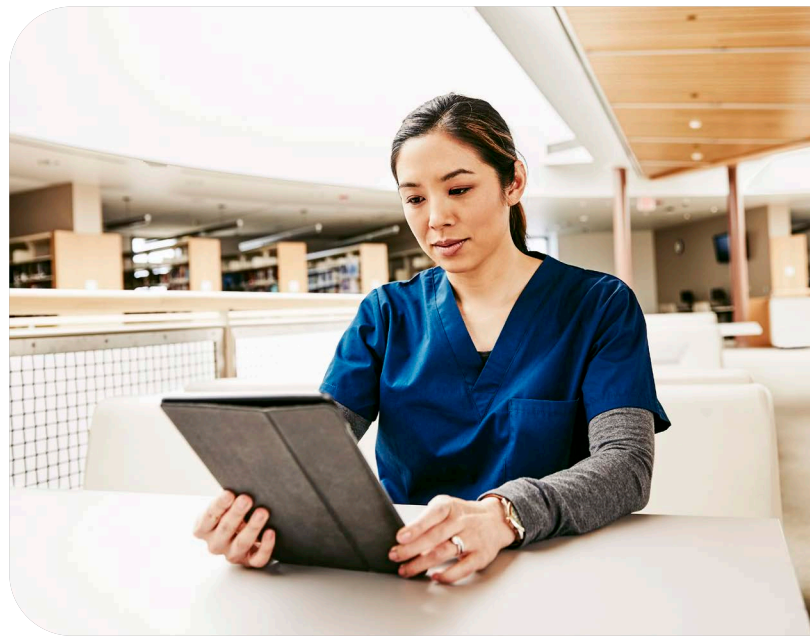
In order to scale the program up, NYC Health + Hospitals leaders determined that the NRP needed a more organized approach, a bigger and stronger team, more structure and, most importantly, more engagement from nurse leadership throughout the system.

Cineas and Belaro devised a plan to expand the program, scaling up six times from the original size. Cineas proposed the expansion to system leadership and garnered support for the plan; Belaro in turn successfully lobbied for and obtained an additional staff member for his team.

The NYC Health + Hospitals nurse residency team now consisted of the senior vice president and chief nursing executive, a senior director of professional practice and education and an assistant director of nursing administration.

To build a stronger infrastructure for the NRP with hospital leadership, "we had to move fast, but in order to do so, we had to be organized," says Natalia Cineas, senior vice president and chief nursing executive for NYC Health + Hospitals. "We needed our leaders to be engaged."

Depending on the position, specific NRP leadership roles range from giving guest lectures at seminars to releasing nurses from their shifts to attend the monthly seminars, and chief nursing officers are an integral part of kickoff sessions and graduation sessions. Everyone in a nurse leadership or management post throughout NYC Health + Hospitals now has a stake in the program's success.



Belaro and his team also created a list of metrics to monitor that success. They included nurse attendance, completion of seminar deliverables like worksheets and case studies, makeup session attendance and, of course, nurse retention rates.



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Improved turnover rates in unprecedented times

As COVID-19 taxed health systems everywhere and clinician burnout regularly topped headlines, NYC Health + Hospitals experienced dramatic improvements in turnover rates—directly attributable to its commitment to the NRP.

A total of 25 cohorts and 1,324 nurses have gone through the program since its inception. Not only has the system improved retention of its new nurses, but Belaro reports that “nurses who are preparing for their board exams are reaching out to see if they can come to work for us and participate in this program.”

With the average expense of nearly \$90,000 to replace a nurse, NYC Health + Hospitals’ nurse recruitment and retention costs have dropped dramatically. More importantly, the system’s patients benefit from the continuity of care provided by a well-trained, well-supported and stable nursing staff.

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A closer look at the curriculum

The Nurse Residency Program is designed to support first-year nurses as they transition to practice. Through 12 monthly seminars, nurses develop skills to safely and confidently practice to the full extent of their license. The sessions fall into three categories: leadership, quality outcomes and professional role.

“The program has helped me grow as a nurse. I feel much more confident now than I did a year ago. This program helps you to become more motivated in patient care, communication and more.”

—NYCHH nurse (2020 participant)



Leadership domain

- Patient care delivery, resource management and delegation
- Patient care coordination
- Interpersonal communication
- Conflict resolution



Quality outcomes domain

- Pain management
- Skin integrity and wound management
- Patient fall prevention
- Medication safety
- Infection prevention and control
- Patient and family education
- Management of the changing patient condition



Professional role domain

- Ethical decision-making
- End-of-life care
- Cultural competence in the nursing environment
- Stress management and self-care
- Evidence-based practice
- Professional development

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