

The power of engagement

Clinician engagement maximizes impact from day one

About Yale New Haven

Yale New Haven Health is Connecticut's leading health care system, consisting of five hospitals and a physician foundation of primary care and medical specialists. The system includes more than 6,685 university and community physicians and advanced practitioners who provide comprehensive, integrated, family-focused care in more than 100 medical specialties.

The system's flagship facility is Yale New Haven Hospital with 1,541 beds. It is the primary teaching hospital of Yale School of Medicine and is nationally ranked among the best hospitals in the United States, according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

Challenge

Clinicians are vital partners in delivering on every health care organization's mission and strategic priorities—at the same time, health systems must invest in, and align and engage with clinicians to support their mission-focused efforts. Research shows that engaged employees are 17% more productive than others, and have 70% fewer safety incidents.¹ At Yale New Haven Health, all new physicians and advanced practice providers (APPs) receive information about tactical items such as benefits and parking. However, individual departments integrated and enculturated these essential team members using widely varying processes leading to variable results, including suboptimal engagement and higher turnover.

Interventions

The APP Clinical Advisory Committee of Yale New Haven Hospital was working on plans to standardize and improve onboarding for new hire APPs. The requisite components of such a program included didactics, along with an opportunity to acculturate to the organization, develop a sense of community and have a mentor during the first year of employment. Simultaneously, the chief medical officer was looking to establish an onboarding program for physicians. Yale New Haven Hospital nursing leaders learned about a Vizient® pilot, Physician and Advanced Practice Provider Onboarding Program, an evidence-based experience designed to drive retention, strategic alignment, engagement, safety and well-being. The Vizient pilot program contained all the key elements the APP Advisory Committee was seeking, including curriculum resources and mentorship tools. The comprehensive Vizient curriculum includes topics such as strategy, resilience, safety, equity and interprofessional collaboration. While Yale initially intended to use the program with APPs under the leadership of its chief nursing officer (CNO), a hallway conversation set bigger plans in motion. CNO Ena Williams mentioned the program to chief medical officer, Thomas Balcezak, MD, and both immediately saw the potential to reduce organizational burden and integrate the care team through a joint onboarding program for physicians and APPs. The Vizient pilot greatly reduced the effort needed for Yale New Haven to undertake this important initiative.

¹ Gallup. (2016). State of the American Workplace Report.

“We are committed to improving the onboarding experience of our clinicians by providing a program that affords learning opportunities, promotes our organizational values, and fosters a sense of belonging. This early investment in clinician well-being can have a lasting impact on them and Yale New Haven Health. The modest amount of time away from clinical care and the associated costs of this program can reap longer-term benefits such as well-acclimated, engaged and productive clinicians.”

Tom Balcezak, MD
Executive Vice President and
Chief Clinical Officer
Yale New Haven Health System

“Yale New Haven Health is committed to improving the experience for our patients, but also for our dedicated providers. Providing cultural assimilation and a sense of belonging is instrumental in validating a new hire’s decision to be here and the ability to retain staff. We intentionally linked the course modules to our strategic pillars to ensure that our culture and values were front and center throughout the program.”

Ena Williams, RN
Senior Vice President and
Chief Nursing Officer
Yale New Haven Hospital

Yale New Haven joined four other pilot organizations and assembled an advisory group to implement the Vizient program. The health system’s talent acquisition team agreed to assist with the identification of potential cohort members, and subgroups tackled the individual components of curriculum and mentorship. The program kicked off its first cohort on Feb. 10, 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic inflicted significant change and reprioritization for the health system and brought the inaugural program to a halt. After much deliberation, the initial cohort was abandoned. A new cohort launched in October 2020 with 29 newly hired physicians and APPs (including certified registered nurse anesthetists, advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants) in the New Haven area. Most clinicians were hospital-based, but the cohort also included ambulatory APPs. Participants included both front-line staff and managers.

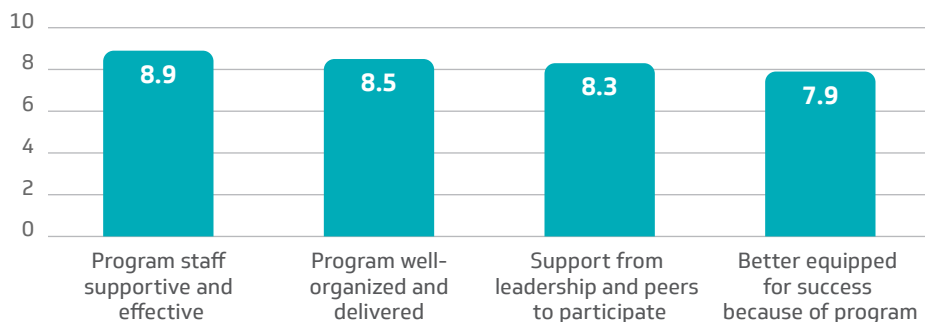
The program was initially designed for six monthly full-day, in-person sessions. Due to social distancing requirements related to COVID-19, the program kicked off with an optional virtual happy hour featuring a brief program overview and personal introductions, followed by six monthly virtual sessions of four to five hours each. Participants previewed brief national content videos provided by Vizient covering the curriculum topics for the upcoming session. Preceding each live virtual session was an informal 15-minute coffee chat for attendees to connect with peers and local system leaders, followed by local system leader presentations and interactive discussions and activities. Assigning a trained mentor to each participant helped encourage monthly connections. As the first cohort approached its end, several participants expressed an interest in connecting in-person with their peers. To facilitate this, the program supplied \$10 hospital cafeteria gift cards and challenged each participant to reach out to at least one cohort peer. The project sponsors, the chief clinical officer for Yale New Haven Health, the CNO for Yale New Haven Hospital, and the vice president of human resources for Yale New Haven Hospital, attended the last session. These leaders emphasized that an organization lives on its culture and its culture lives in its people. The leaders encouraged participants to steward the investment made in them by sharing their learnings with others.

One of the most difficult challenges associated with the program is providing time for the participants to attend cohort sessions and meet with their mentors, especially when there are multiple new hires from a single department. The hospitalist service selected six clinicians from among a larger group based on coverage considerations and clinician interest. Reducing clinical sessions or providing cross-coverage is both logistically difficult and costly but will be essential for the sustainability of the program. This investment requires a long-term view of the strategic partnership between the organization and its clinicians.

Results

Participants reported high satisfaction with the program and indicated that the program equipped them for success (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Program experience rating



“I look forward to these sessions each month. It has been a wonderfully productive reprieve from clinical responsibilities. I genuinely wish this program would go for a year or beyond. I think especially right now, it’s nice to connect, to learn collectively, and to rejuvenate. I didn’t realize how powerful this one session per month would prove to be in my own self-care.”

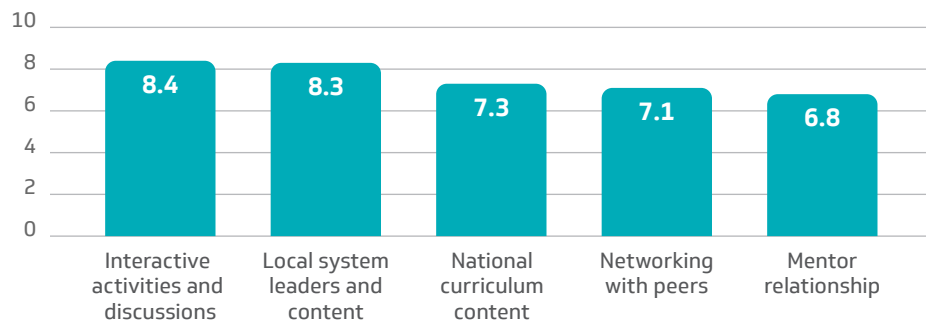
Daurie Marsden, MS, CRNA, APRN
Program participant

“I’d like my legacy to be this robust, impactful onboarding program we began for MDs and APPs. Ideally, every new employee should have an onboarding experience that welcomes them and orients them to our culture.”

Kathleen Quinn
Senior Manager
Institute for Excellence

Participants highly valued all components of the program (Figure 2). Although participants in the first cohort were unable to interact face to face, the interactive activities and networking were still very highly rated.

Figure 2. Program components ratings



Local leaders living with the high attrition and suboptimal engagement were enthusiastic about the potential value-add of the program. Subject matter experts and other local leaders interacting with the cohort were enthusiastic about the program. Some expressed a desire to spend even more time with the cohort. Others commented that they would like the program available to other disciplines, such as pharmacy and respiratory therapy. Manager participants were highly engaged and expressed their intentions to use their learnings in their role as leaders. This feedback suggests that the program’s approach would be beneficial if used more broadly and beyond newly hired physicians and APPs.

Yale New Haven Health hopes to start two or three cohorts in 2021 with full-day in-person sessions when feasible. Planned enhancements include additional interactive group activities and refined local system leader content. Expanding into more geographically dispersed areas will present new challenges, especially for ambulatory medical groups, which can be both physically and culturally diverse. The program team’s experience with virtual delivery, while unplanned, has equipped them for this new challenge.

Lessons learned

A comprehensive engagement program will only succeed if key stakeholders and leaders are involved in the goal setting, design and oversight of the program. When both the organization and the participants invest time and energy into the effort, powerful results can be achieved for the organization, its clinicians and its patients.

Vizient can help your organization deploy this program to onboard newly hired or acquired clinicians, align existing teams, advance system integration, or accelerate the impact of your leaders.

The Vizient Physician and Advanced Practice Provider Onboarding and Engagement Program creates a consistent, evidence-based experience for clinicians that drives retention, strategic alignment, engagement, safety and well-being.



To learn more about how to improve clinician engagement and alignment, contact our team at onboarding@vizientinc.com.

As the nation’s largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides solutions and services that empower health care providers to deliver high-value care by aligning cost, quality and market performance. With analytics, advisory services and a robust sourcing portfolio, we help members improve patient outcomes and lower costs.