

Practice Transition Accreditation Program



CASE STUDY: Standardizing Nurse Residency Across RWJ Barnabas Health

BACKGROUND

RWJ Barnabas Health is the largest academic healthcare system in New Jersey, partnering with Rutgers University. The system is dedicated to providing high-quality patient care, leading-edge research, and world-class health and medical education. RWJ Barnabas Health treats over 3 million patients annually and employs over 41,000 employees, including 11,000 nurses. The system comprises 12 acute care hospitals, three designated children's hospitals, pediatric inpatient rehab levels, and numerous outpatient facilities and physician practices.

CHALLENGE

The primary challenge faced by RWJ Barnabas Health was the need to standardize and expand their nurse residency programs across multiple sites within the healthcare system. The existing programs varied significantly in structure and implementation, leading to inconsistencies in training and outcomes. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new challenges, including increased stress and burnout among residents and a drop in retention rates.

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

To address these challenges, RWJ Barnabas Health implemented several key strategies:

- **Program Expansion:** Expanding the nurse residency programs to include multiple specialty areas and standardizing the curriculum across all sites.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging key stakeholders, including nursing leadership, human resources, and educators, to ensure buy-in and support for the program.
- **Hybrid Learning Model:** Implementing a hybrid model of in-person and virtual education to accommodate residents across the state.
- **Wellness Initiatives:** Introducing wellness initiatives, such as "drumming away stress," to support residents' mental health and well-being.
- **System Preceptor Course:** Developing a system-wide preceptor course to standardize training and mentorship for new nurses.

RESULTS

The expanded and standardized nurse residency program led to several positive outcomes:



Improved Retention Rates:

Despite initial challenges, the program achieved a 92% one-year retention rate for nurse residents.



Standardized Curriculum:

Successfully implemented a standardized curriculum and competency forms across all nine specialty tracks.



Increased Cohorts:

Established four cohorts per year for hiring nurse residents, ensuring a consistent and structured onboarding process.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the program were highly positive, including:

- **Enhanced Training:** Improved training and support for new nurse residents, leading to better clinical skills and confidence.
- **Strong Leadership Support:** Continued support from RWJ Barnabas Health's leadership team, facilitating the successful implementation and sustainability of the program.
- **Accreditation Achievement:** Achieved PTAP accreditation with distinction for multiple sites, validating the quality and effectiveness of the nurse residency program.

CONCLUSION

RWJ Barnabas Health's nurse residency program serves as a model for effectively standardizing and expanding training across a large healthcare system. Through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to continuous improvement, RWJ Barnabas Health has successfully enhanced the readiness and retention of new nurse residents, ultimately improving patient care and outcomes.

ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP). recognizes programs that offer high-quality nurse residency and fellowship programs that transition nurses into practice with confidence and competence.

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