

Pathway to Excellence® Case Study: CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center - Bergan Mercy Significantly Improves Nurse Engagement

CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center - Bergan Mercy (formerly Bergan Mercy Medical Center) was the first health care facility in Nebraska to earn ANCC Pathway to Excellence® designation in 2013.

Nursing leaders opted to pursue the Pathway credential because they wanted staff to drive the designation. The Pathway standards provided a framework to motivate staff and gave nurses at all levels the opportunity to actively participate in the designation process. Leaders established 12 teams – one for every standard – and designated a staff champion for each, ultimately involving more than 150 nurses. In addition, they conducted regular surveys to assess challenges and opportunities.

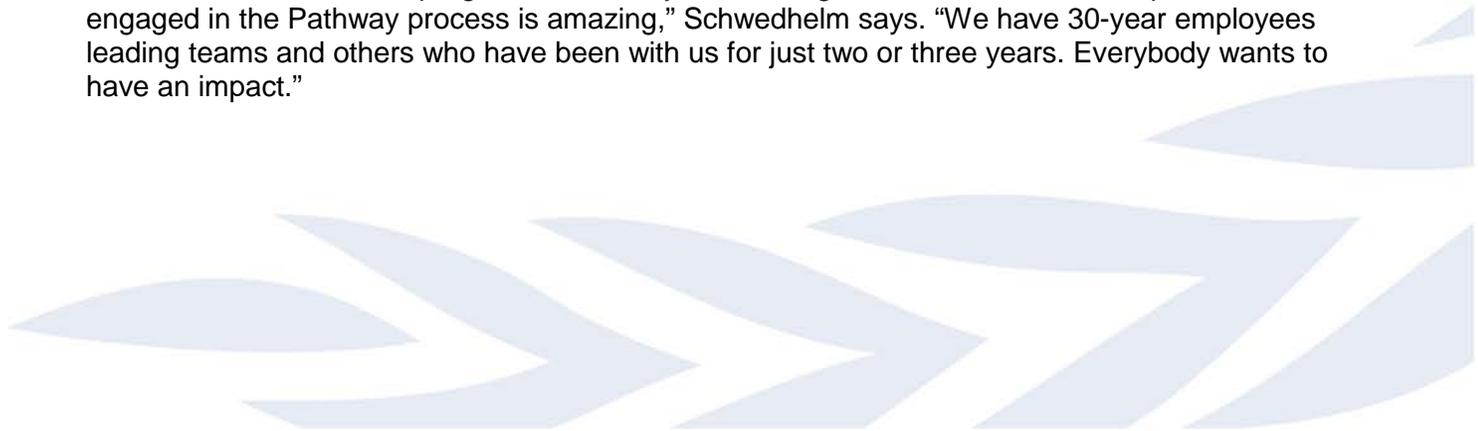
“We implemented a strategy to survey our nursing staff quarterly to gauge what our nurses were thinking and feeling,” explains Kevin Schwedhelm, MSN, RN, Chief Nurse Executive at Bergan Mercy and Vice President of Patient Care Services. “We really needed to understand where our staff was coming from so at the end of the day we could honestly say ‘we are who we say we are.’”

Bergan Mercy’s Pathway Steering Committee analyzed survey results and implemented plans to address and fix identified issues. As a result, engagement scores rose significantly on all 42 survey questions from the start of the Pathway journey through designation.

One of the biggest areas of improvement was scheduling. After nurses identified gaps in the medical center’s staffing policies, the Pathway team developed and implemented a flexible staffing strategy that created a contingency staff to accommodate fluctuating patient volumes. Positive answers to survey questions regarding flexible staffing rose 20%, and increased 32% for question about routine schedules.

Another focus was work-life balance. To promote a more balanced lifestyle for nurses, staff created spaces throughout the hospital for RNs to relax and established dedicated lactation rooms for breastfeeding mothers. The staff-driven initiative produced a 15% increase in positive responses to question about the organization’s commitment to work-life balance.

As Bergan Mercy prepares for Pathway redesignation, the focus is on issues around the compensation standard. Nurses are involved in building a career ladder and improving RN recruitment and retention programs. “The way our nursing team and the whole hospital are engaged in the Pathway process is amazing,” Schwedhelm says. “We have 30-year employees leading teams and others who have been with us for just two or three years. Everybody wants to have an impact.”



Results

In just one year, Bergan Mercy achieved the following improvements in Pathway survey responses:

- Positive answers to questions about flexible staffing increased 20%, from 70% to 90%.
- Positive responses to questions about routine schedules increased 32%, from 63% to 95%.
- Positive responses to questions about work-life balance improved 15%, from 71% to 86%.

About CHI Health

CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center - Bergan Mercy is part of CHI Health, serving residents of Nebraska, southwest Iowa and northern Kansas. In addition to 15 acute care hospitals, CHI Health includes more than 150 clinical locations, two psychiatric facilities and other health care sites. It is part of the Catholic Health Initiatives, a national non-profit health system that nurtures the healing ministry of the Catholic Church as it improves the lives of the people and communities it serves.

About the Pathway to Excellence® Program

The Pathway to Excellence® Program recognizes a healthcare organization's commitment to creating a positive nursing practice environment. The Pathway to Excellence in Long Term Care® program is the first to recognize this type of supportive work setting specifically in long-term care facilities. Pathway organizations focus on collaboration, career development, and accountable leadership to empower nurses.