

Pathway to Excellence® Case Study: Ohio's Hospice of Dayton

Ohio's Hospice of Dayton is a national leader in the provision of high quality, compassionate care for end-of-life patients and their families. When it opened its doors in the late 1970s, it was one of the first hospice organizations in the United States. Nearly 40 years later, it became the first hospice in the nation to achieve the prestigious Pathway to Excellence designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

The community-based, not-for-profit provider wanted to raise awareness of the importance of hospice and palliative care nursing, while recognizing and honoring the care its nurses provide to patients during the last journey of their lives. Pursuit of the Pathway credential offered a sustainable framework to achieve these goals.

"Our nurses deliver excellent care on a daily basis and they do so with humility and grace," says Mary Murphy, RN, MS, AOCN, ACHPN, Chief Nursing and Care Officer. "Our successful designation as the first Pathway to Excellence hospice celebrates these dedicated individuals – as well as all members of our staff – by giving them the processes and structure in which their voices are heard. They feel supported by the entire organization."

From the moment it launched its Pathway journey, Ohio's Hospice of Dayton reaped positive results. It built on its shared decision-making structure, implementing councils at the unit level. Now, all members of its interdisciplinary staff feel empowered to improve the care environment. They suggest new equipment, participate in peer interviews, serve on committees and councils, and pursue evidence-based changes that enhance patient care.

Ohio's Hospice of Dayton highlighted other areas of organizational achievement in qualifying for Pathway to Excellence designation including:

- **Higher morale.** Achieving an honor traditionally awarded to acute care and long-term care organizations instilled a sense of pride and accomplishment among staff. Nurses who have pride in their work provide better care, which benefits patients. Likewise, the Pathway designation attracts professionals who want to be part of an organization that values nursing.
- **Professional growth.** The percentage of staff using tuition assistance to pursue professional certifications, continuing education opportunities, and advanced degrees jumped from 10% to 35%.
- **Partnership opportunities.** Wright State University's School of Nursing recognized Hospice of Dayton for achieving the Pathway credential and presented CNO Mary Murphy with its leadership award. The school wants to collaborate to ensure the organization maintains its designation. Wright State's nursing students recognize that hospice and palliative care nursing is evidence-based and an important part of the continuum of care for all patients and families.

Because hospice care is an interdisciplinary model, every initiative that benefits nurses benefits all staff. Examples include:

- **The Bouquet of Recognition Award.** Modeled after the DAISY Award for nursing, this interprofessional award now includes the Sunflower Award for nurse's aides, the Tulip Award for non-nurse clinicians, and the Carnation Award for non-clinical support staff. In addition to a bouquet of flowers, winners receive a statue specially crafted by a tribe in Africa.
- **Recognition of night shift and after-hours employees.** The organization produced a special safety guide for its 119 staff who work outside of normal hours and recognized them in a formal ceremony during Night Shift Workers' Week.

CNO Murphy offers advice for other hospice organizations considering the Pathway journey. "Be sure to involve all staff from the beginning," she says. "Our ancillary staff and physicians were among our strongest supporters. And don't be afraid to change things up as you go. Most of all, enjoy the journey and celebrate all successes. The Pathway to Excellence Designation lets the community know: "the best nurses work here!"

About Ohio's Hospice of Dayton

Founded in 1978, Hospice of Dayton is a community-based, not-for-profit care provider with a mission to celebrate the lives of those it has the privilege to serve by providing superior care and superior services to each patient and family. Specialists in hospice and palliative care, including physicians, RNs, APRNs, respiratory therapists, social workers, home health aides, chaplains and pharmacists, work collaboratively to help patients and caregivers gain comfort and peace of mind while embracing life's journey.

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.