

Practice Transition Accreditation Program



American Nurses Credentialing Center

CASE STUDY: Transforming Nurse Residency at Wellstar Health System

BACKGROUND

Wellstar Health System is a multi-site healthcare system located in Georgia, recently expanding to include Augusta University Health System. Wellstar operates 11 hospitals, 17 urgent care facilities, a pediatric center, and numerous other healthcare facilities, employing over 24,000 team members. The Wellstar Rising Stars Nurse Residency Program is designed to support new graduate nurses in transitioning from academic settings to professional practice.

CHALLENGE

The primary challenge faced by Wellstar Health System was to standardize and enhance their nurse residency program across multiple sites to achieve ANCC's Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP) accreditation. The goal was to ensure consistency in training and support for new graduate nurses, improve retention rates, and align the program with the system's strategic goals, all while navigating the complexities of a multi-site healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGY

To address these challenges, Wellstar implemented several key strategies:

- **System Leadership Support:** Secured strong support from system leadership, including the Chief Nurse Executive and senior site-level nursing leadership.
- **Gap Analysis:** Conducted a thorough gap analysis to identify areas needing improvement and align with PTAP standards.
- **Consistent Program Structure:** Established a system-level program for consistency across all sites, including a Nurse Residency Advisory Council and regular reporting mechanisms.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaged all stakeholders, including site coordinators, preceptors, nurse managers, and academic partners, in the decision-making process.
- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Implemented a robust evaluation process, including biannual program evaluations, session evaluations, and stakeholder feedback to continuously improve the program.
- **Communication and Training:** Maintained open communication channels and provided extensive training and preparation for the accreditation process, including workshops, seminars, and mock site visits.

RESULTS

The implementation of these strategies led to several positive outcomes:



Accreditation Achievement:

Successfully achieved PTAP accreditation for 10 hospitals within the system.



Improved Retention Rates:

Achieved and exceeded the goal of a 90% first-year retention rate for nurse residents, even during the pandemic.



Enhanced Program Consistency:

Established a consistent and standardized nurse residency program across all sites, ensuring all residents receive the same high-quality training and support.

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OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the program were highly positive, including:

- **Strong Leadership Support:** Continued strong support from system leadership, facilitating the successful implementation and sustainability of the program.
- **Positive Feedback:** Positive feedback from residents, preceptors, and stakeholders regarding the program's structure, support, and impact on professional development.
- **Future Goals:** Identified areas for future improvement, including extending support to second-year nurses to further improve retention rates.

CONCLUSION

Wellstar Health System's nurse residency program serves as a model for effectively standardizing and enhancing training across a large, multi-site healthcare system. Through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and commitment to continuous improvement, Wellstar 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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