

Practice Transition Accreditation Program

 American Nurses Credentialing Center

CASE STUDY: University of Miami Health System's Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP) Journey

BACKGROUND

University of Miami Health System, known as UHealth, is South Florida's only university-based academic health system, spanning three hospitals, more than 700 licensed beds, and over 40 outpatient sites.

The Titan Canes Nurse Residency Program supports more than 120 nurse residents annually through three cohorts across inpatient and ambulatory settings. The 12-month program blends onboarding, precepted practice, classroom learning, simulation, mentoring, and evidence-based practice.

UHealth pursued PTAP accreditation during its Magnet® journey to strengthen program consistency, align with best practices, and use accreditation as a framework for continuous improvement.

CHALLENGE

Program leaders identified several gaps affecting consistency, readiness, and outcome tracking across practice settings.

- Inconsistent onboarding across inpatient, ambulatory, and specialty settings.
- Limited alignment among curriculum, competencies, outcomes, and PTAP standards.
- Variation in preceptor preparation and expectations.
- A six-month model that did not fully support nurses through the first year of practice.
- Manual tracking of retention, satisfaction, competency progression, and outcomes.
- Need for stronger governance, shared ownership, and stakeholder accountability.

These gaps highlighted the need for a more standardized, data-informed, and sustainable program infrastructure.

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

UHealth treated accreditation as a transformation effort. The team first completed a formal gap analysis against PTAP domains, then implemented improvements before submitting the application.

- **Built a clear governance and leadership structure:** The program clarified roles for executive leaders, residency leaders, educators, coordinators, Magnet specialists, mentors, preceptors, and subject matter experts.
- **Secured executive sponsorship and stakeholder engagement:** Executive sponsorship and frequent communication through leadership forums, advisory meetings, and stakeholder discussions helped build shared commitment.
- **Standardized the program while preserving practice-setting flexibility:** The team moved from a six-month to a 12-month model, creating a consistent year-long experience while preserving tailored onboarding by practice setting.
- **Strengthened preceptor preparation and support:** UHealth added a focused four-hour preceptor workshop to reinforce program expectations, competency validation, feedback, action planning, and resident support.
- **Created data and tracking infrastructure:** The team improved tracking for retention, satisfaction, competencies, and outcomes through HR reporting, residency platforms, and routine review of feedback data.
- **Prepared intentionally for application and survey readiness:** The accreditation team assigned domain responsibilities, organized evidence, attended PTAP learning sessions, and conducted mock surveys to reduce anxiety and strengthen readiness.

RESULTS

The PTAP journey strengthened the program's structure, visibility, and culture of accountability across the organization.

- Achieved PTAP accreditation in spring 2025.
- Strengthened alignment with Magnet principles and transition-to-practice best practices.
- Increased applicant interest, with one summer cohort application window rising from approximately 300 to 900 applicants in one week.
- Created a more consistent year-long experience across inpatient and ambulatory settings.
- Improved preceptor preparation, outcome tracking, and data-driven decision-making.

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OUTCOMES

PTAP accreditation validated UHealth's work to build a stronger transition-to-practice program. The Titan Canes Nurse Residency Program emerged with clearer governance, stronger stakeholder accountability, improved preceptor preparation, better data systems, and a more supportive 12-month model.

The transition to a 12-month model strengthened retention support by keeping residents connected to the program through the first year, allowing leaders to identify concerns earlier, intervene before nurses left the organization, and improve retention tracking through monthly HR reporting.

The process also embedded continuous improvement through ongoing curriculum review, resident feedback, data monitoring, and leader education.

CONCLUSION

UHealth's PTAP journey shows how accreditation can drive meaningful program transformation. By assessing gaps, engaging stakeholders, strengthening systems, and using data, the organization built a more consistent and sustainable residency model.

For UHealth, PTAP became more than an accreditation milestone; it became a framework for excellence and ongoing improvement.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Start early.** Complete a gap analysis before applying.
- **Build systems first.** Organize evidence, data, and tracking processes in advance.
- **Engage stakeholders.** Involve leaders, educators, preceptors, residents, and support teams early and often.
- **Standardize with flexibility.** Create shared expectations while tailoring onboarding by setting.
- **Invest in preceptors.** Provide tools for feedback, competency validation, and resident support.
- **Use data.** Let retention, satisfaction, competency, and feedback data guide improvements.
- **Practice readiness.** Mock surveys help stakeholders prepare and reduce anxiety.
- **Sustain momentum.** Treat accreditation as a framework for continuous improvement

The ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP) sets the global standard for residency or fellowship programs that transition registered nurses (RNs) into new practice settings.

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