Recruitment and Retention Toolkit for Registered Nurses in Acute Care Settings

FUTURE OF NURSING™
Campaign for Action
AT THE CENTER TO CHAMPION NURSING IN AMERICA

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
AARP Foundation

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I. Overview

AARP has a long history of investing in nursing and championing a robust nursing workforce as essential for the care of older adults and their families. Currently, the nursing profession faces two critical, intersecting challenges: a severe shortage of nurses and a pressing need for greater diversity within the workforce.

According to research from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 100,000 nurses left the workforce during the pandemic. By 2027, almost 900,000, or almost one-fifth of 4.5 million total registered nurses, intend to leave the workforce (Martin, B, Kaminski-Ozturk, N. O'Hara, C., Smiley, R., 2023). While efforts are being made to address challenges faced by health care workers, ongoing support is essential to ensure a strong nursing workforce across all care settings where nurses practice. In collaboration with nurse leaders across the nation, AARP and the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action* created this toolkit offering resources and effective strategies for nurse recruitment and retention, while also creating a sense of belonging.

This toolkit is designed to aid acute care nurse leaders in the recruitment and retention of RNs. It focuses on strategies that foster a sense of belonging, addressing gaps in current approaches to diversity and inclusion.

The toolkit is divided into chapters for ease of use, showcasing examples from clinical practice leaders across the country. It also includes guides, frameworks, linked resources and a reference section.

Evidence for Belonging

By prioritizing a sense of belonging, health care organizations can create healthier work environments that attract and retain a strong, diverse nursing workforce, ultimately enhancing patient care and promoting health equity.

Eric Carter, PhD, a Vanderbilt Kennedy Medical Center member, explains that people need to be more than "integrated" or "included." He and his team studied the quality of belonging and identified ten themes. In order to experience a sense of belonging, individuals must feel: loved, present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, and needed (cited in Merrill, K.C.; Turner, 2019).

Central to effective nurse recruitment and retention is the establishment of healthy work environments (HWEs). HWEs foster a sense of belonging and respect for individual needs, creating the foundation for equitable patient care (Reinhardt, León, & Amatya, 2020). As emphasized in the National Academy of Medicine's *Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity*, strengthening recruitment and retention in nursing is essential for health equity and the development of a culturally competent, diverse workforce (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021).

The sense of belonging plays a pivotal role in retention. Research consistently shows that belonging improves well-being, job satisfaction, and resilience. The American Nurses Foundation's 2022 *Workplace Survey* revealed that 90% of nurses face severe staffing shortages, leading to feelings of disconnection and burnout. Addressing these challenges, the U.S. Surgeon General's *Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being* highlights the importance of community and mattering at work as key drivers of employee retention (Murthy, 2022).

Psychological studies, including Maslow's foundational *Hierarchy of Needs*, identify belonging as a core human motivator, enhancing behavior, resilience, and job satisfaction. In health care, creating a supportive environment where nurses feel valued directly contributes to recruitment and retention efforts. This is especially impactful for nurses from underrepresented backgrounds, who bring unique perspectives that enhance patient care and health outcomes.

Belonging also improves organizational performance. Studies indicate that workplaces with high belonging levels report better teamwork, engagement, and retention rates. A Harvard Business Review report found that organizations investing heavily in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training often miss the mark without a true culture of belonging (Carr, Reece, Kellerman, & Robichaux, 2019). Integrating belonging into DEI strategies amplifies diversity efforts, fostering a collaborative environment where all team members can thrive.

II. Assessment of Recruitment Capabilities: Conduct an Assessment of Your Organization's Current State for the Setting

The first step in increasing the sense of belonging in your organization is to conduct an assessment. The assessment can help describe the organization's current state and identify areas for improvement. Common items to consider in an assessment are the presence or absence of best practices, and the current measurement tools in place to evaluate recruitment and retention strategies and measure nurses' sense of belonging. Once the assessment is completed, an action plan for change can be created, implemented, monitored, and evaluated for improvement in recruitment, retention and sense of belonging. Assessment tools and strategies are included in the following section of this toolkit.

A. Nursing Recruitment Assessment Tool

The following assessment tool was developed by the authors to help care sites assess current recruitment and retention effectiveness. The variables are derived from current evidence on criteria essential for improving recruitment and retention of RNs.

Directions: Collect the data to determine current vacancy rates. For each of the criteria, determine if it is in place (yes); is partially in place (minimal) or not in place (no). Based on the assessment, an action plan can be developed.

Table I: Nursing Recruitment Assessment Tool

Data Collection				
RN vacancy rate overall				
RN vacancy rate highest rates by unit/ specialty				
Criteria: Do you have?	**No**	**Minimal**	**Yes**	**Action Plan**
A way to recruit nursing candidates that reaches broad and diverse networks				
A structured interview process of standardized interview questions that decreases bias				
A program for clinical placement of students in high vacancy rate units				
A new hire transition to practice program				
A strategy to meet the generational needs of nurses from all age cohorts				

Data Collection				
Criteria: Do you have?	**No**	**Minimal**	**Yes**	**Action Plan**
A summer nurse extern program for working nursing students				
Dedicated nursing education units (for nursing students)				
A nurse residency program				
Is your transition to practice program accredited (American Nurses Credentialing Center's Practice Transition Accreditation Program)				
A mentoring program for new nurses				
Scholarships or loan forgiveness				
A comprehensive, market-competitive total compensation & benefits package				
Scheduling options that meet nurses need for work/life balance				

B. Promoting a Sense of Belonging in Recruitment Practices

The following are evidence-based strategies to promote a sense of belonging for candidates during the recruitment process. Additionally, other evidence-based best practices are included in *C. Table II: RN Recruitment Best Practices.*

***Structured Interviews*:** Use standardized interview questions to minimize biases and focus on candidates' competencies and experiences. Consider educating the interviewing team on minimizing bias in hiring practices.

Clinical Placement of Students: Foster a positive interprofessional clinical experience for nursing students.

***Transition to Practice Programs*:** Develop a transition-to-practice program based on the standards in the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP) 12-month program; consider reviewing the Magnet Recognition Program® criteria for ideas on how to onboard new graduates and new to the organization nurses.

***Address Generational Needs*:** Address experiential differences; gather views on what is important for job satisfaction. Be sure to include education for nurse managers on how to manage a multi-generational nursing workforce.

***Expand Channels to Attract a Diverse Group of Candidates*:** Identify your current, and develop new, candidate pools that encourage a diverse group of applicants. Consider collaborating with local colleges and universities, community organizations, career fairs, events, and professional associations.

C. RN Recruitment to Practice Site: Best Practices

Table II: RN Recruitment Best Practices

Nursing Recruitment Best Practice	Description
Nurse summer student externs early hire	Nursing student summer extern programs are excellent opportunities for nursing students to gain practical, hands-on experience in a clinical setting. These programs typically take place during the summer months and allow students to work alongside experienced nurses and other health care professionals, providing direct patient care while learning and refining essential nursing skills. Offering a job at the end of the summer before graduation provides a reliable pipeline. See Appendix B for more information on summer nurse extern programs.
"Earn While you Learn" model	During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mary Washington Healthcare in Fredericksburg, Va., and Germanna Community College formed an academic practice partnership, which met both hospital and student needs. The partners adopted an "Earn While You Learn" model, which provided financial support to RN and certified nursing assistant (CNA) students and gave the Mary Washington Health System a cohort of recruits with greater practice readiness. How the collaborators launched the program in just a few weeks and onboarded the students while staff members were stretched thin by the pandemic is detailed in a workforce development case study from the American Hospital Association (AHA). Additional resources to support staffing efforts are posted on the AHA's workforce resource page. (AHA case study, 1/13/22). See references section VII.
Dedicated education unit	Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) are innovative clinical teaching models designed to improve the training experience of nursing students and support new graduate nurses as they transition into professional practice. The DEU model is a partnership between academic institutions and health care facilities, aimed at enhancing the clinical learning environment. It allows new nurses to gain real-world experience under the guidance of experienced staff in a structured yet dynamic setting. See appendix B for more information about dedicated education units.

Nursing Recruitment Best Practice	Description
Nurse residencies	Nurse residency programs are structured transition-to-practice programs designed to support newly graduated nurses as they begin their professional careers. These programs provide a bridge between academic preparation and clinical practice, offering mentorship, continued education, and hands-on clinical experience in a supportive environment. One example of an RN Nurse Residency program is Vizient/American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Nurse Residency Program. It focuses on critical thinking, leadership, and professional role development.
Nurse mentoring programs	New nurse mentoring programs are critical for fostering a supportive learning environment that enhances clinical skills and strengthens professional development. Often structured in a cohort model, nurse mentoring programs may include 1:1 mentoring, group mentoring, preceptors, reflective practice, frequent check-ins, and well-being support.
Scholarships with work commitment	A strategy to assure a pipeline of new graduates, offering scholarships in return for a work commitment can help with longer term hiring patterns. Work commitments are typically two years.
Recruitment of experienced or retired nurses – recruiting retired nurses – part time; virtual; mentoring; preceptor roles	An emerging practice is recruiting retired nurses into support roles for new graduates. This includes serving as new graduate nurse preceptor, being available for flexible shifts as a resource nurse for new hires or taking on specialized roles such as serving as an “admission” or “discharge” nurse.
Specialized RN orientation	A specialized RN orientation refers to a targeted training and onboarding program designed for RNs who are entering a specific clinical specialty, such as critical care, oncology, labor and delivery, or emergency nursing. These programs go beyond the general orientation that all new nurses receive, focusing on the unique skills, knowledge, and competencies required for the area of practice.

Nursing Recruitment Best Practice	Description
Benefits and compensation for RNs: Total benefits packages options • Total benefit package • Sign on bonus • PTO time • Life/Health/Dental/Vision insurance • Pet insurance • Financial well-being • 401K match • Providing resources for loan payback/ forgiveness, i.e., SAVI program.	A benefits and compensation package needs to be competitive, at least 50% of the market or higher, depending on the competition in the market. Competitive pay means offering employees (and potential employees) a salary or hourly rate that is equal to or greater than what other organizations within your industry or geographical area are offering. The goal of competitive pay is to ensure fair compensation for employees while also providing a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining talent.
Develop strategic partnerships with federally designated Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) to recruit new nursing graduates	A strategic partnership with MSIs to recruit nursing students can help address disparities in nursing by improving diversity across race, ethnicity, gender, and age. This strategy aims to bridge gaps in representation while fostering a workforce that reflects the demographics of the communities being served.
Review the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action's* Equity-Minded Nurse initiative to apply concepts in RN recruitment and retention strategies. The *Campaign* is an initiative of AARP Foundation, AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.	Review the best practices of equity-minded nurses to apply these ideas to the recruitment process.
Creative scheduling options	Creating innovative scheduling options for RNs in acute care hospitals can improve work-life balance, reduce burnout, and increase job satisfaction, all while maintaining high-quality patient care. Options to be evaluated include virtual nursing shifts; telehealth options; self-scheduling programs; job sharing; part time work; alternative shift lengths; weekend programs; per diem and float pool options.
Long-term care RN recruitment strategies	Many of the same recruitment strategies that are effective in acute care can be applied to long-term care (LTC) settings. Creating career pathways for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) to progress to a licensed practical nurse (LPN) and RN roles is a good strategy to develop a pipeline.

III. Assessment of RN Retention Strategies

It is important to continually assess RN retention strategies, especially as it relates to nurses' sense of belonging to the nursing community in the organization. This assessment tool, developed by the authors and based on the evidence, is a starting point to evaluating your organization's current state, and development of a plan to strengthen RN retention strategies to lower turnover and vacancy rates.

A. Nursing Retention Assessment Tool

Table III: Nursing Retention Assessment Tool

Data Collection		Notes
RN turnover rate overall		
Turnover rate of RNs with less than two years of experience		
Employee engagement scores		
Belonging scale scores		
The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses' (AACN Critical Care) Healthy Work Environment Assessment Tool (HWEAT) score results		
Magnet assessment tool results		
Nurse manager turnover rate overall		
Turnover rate of nurse managers with more than two years' experience		
Demographic data by race, ethnicity, age, gender of nurse workforce (RNs and nurse managers)		
% of BSN nurses		
% of nurse managers with MS degree		
CNO years of experience as CNO		

Assessment Criteria				
Criteria: Do you have?	**No**	**Minimal**	**Yes**	**Action Plan**
Shared governance program in place that includes a forum for feedback and concerns from all nurses, which are collected and addressed				
A nurse well-being strategy/program to promote work/life balance				
A nurse recognition program: DAISY program Nurse of the year program Nurse manager recognition Other nurse recognition program				
Career ladder				
Career development resources and opportunities that are accessible to all nurses				
Continuing education opportunities				
Conference attendance (regional/ national conferences)				
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) policies in place				
Diversity audits				
Education on cultural competence				
Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)				
An RN mentoring program tailored to support a diverse workforce				
An RN fellowship program				
Payment and support for certification prep courses and exam fees				

Assessment Criteria				
Criteria: Do you have?	**No**	**Minimal**	**Yes**	**Action Plan**
Strategy for inclusive leadership				
Organizational training for cultural competence and inclusive leadership				
Accessible opportunities for career advancement				

B. Creating a Sense of Belonging in Retention Practices

Outlined below are overarching strategies to improve the sense of belonging:

Inclusive Leadership: Train leaders on inclusive practices and cultural competence to foster a supportive environment for all staff members.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Establish ERGs that reflect the diversity of the workforce, providing a platform for networking, support, and advocacy.

Feedback Mechanisms: Create avenues for nurses to voice their concerns and suggestions anonymously, ensuring their perspectives are heard and acted upon.

***Workplace Environment*:** Ability to participate in professional development activities; authentic leadership; embracing social justice; team unification; feeling heard and being seen; recognition; create a physically and psychologically safe environment.

***Operationalize DEIB*:** Establish and enforce norms, policies, and programs that eliminate discrimination and bias, and create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees.

***Equitable Access*:** Ensure those with disabilities have equitable access to employment, workplace participation, accommodations, and modifications (*The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being*, 2022).

C. RN Retention Strategies

Table IV outlines best practices in nursing retention with a focus on increasing belonging and, ultimately, a more stable workforce, with lower vacancy and turnover rates of RNs.

Table IV: RN Retention Strategies and Best Practices

Nursing Retention Best Practice	Description
Mentorship Programs	Develop mentoring relationships between new hires and experienced staff to provide guidance and support, enhancing integration into the organization. Assign a mentor to each new graduate nurse to support the new nurse as they transition into practice.
Career Development for All Nurses	Offer opportunities for career development through pathways to promotion and lifelong opportunities in the care setting. Career development strategies include: • Clinical ladder • Promotions and career mapping • Career advancement mapping (NP pathway within org; nurse manager; nurse educator; acute care NP) • Career development center within the organization (e.g.: Edelman Nursing Career Center) • Internal transfers encouraged to specialty areas Tailoring career development interventions over the career lifespan of the nurse: new grad; 2-5 years; 5-10 years; mid-career; and late career based on generational differences.
Professional Growth Opportunities for All Nurses	Offer opportunities for professional growth through continuous education, certifications, and leadership development programs. Professional development: • Continuing education and cohort models for RN – BSN; Master's • Conference attendance • Tuition assistance • Certification exams and prep courses offered • Leadership development • Mentoring programs • Fellowships

Nursing Retention Best Practice	Description
Mental Health & Well-being of the Nursing Workforce	Developing a comprehensive well-being program for nurses and all clinicians is essential to assuring a whole and purpose-driven workforce. Multiple organizations have hired chief wellness officers to develop and lead programs that are both proactive and able to provide psychological first aid. Key components include Protect from Harm (safety & security); Connection and Community (social support & belonging); Opportunity for Growth (learning & accomplishment); Mattering at Work (dignity & meaning); Work-Life Harmony (autonomy & flexibility) as outlined in *The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being.*
Recognition	Beyond saying "thank you," a comprehensive recognition program for nurses and other health care providers should be in place. A multitude of programs are available. Consider the DAISY recognition program; Nurse of the Year Awards; meaningful recognition opportunities woven into practice; team awards; external accreditation such as Pathway to Excellence™; Magnet Recognition ©; the Beacon Award and others. Publicly recognizing nurses in internal and external newsletters and on organizational social media is also helpful. (Guney & Robertson, 2024)
Expanded and Creative Nursing Roles	There are opportunities for clinically focused RNs to have expanded and creative nursing roles that allow them to experience different care experiences, different shifts, and remote work. A few of these include: • Virtual nursing – A camera enabled view of the patient room with audio connectivity. Virtual nurses can support bedside RNs to visually assess patients, obtain assessment/admission data, conduct teaching and discharge planning virtually. Virtual nurses can work remotely and can also support new graduate nurses who need clinical consultation. • Dual roles for clinical nurses – For example, serving as a preceptor to new graduates, serving as charge nurse or resource nurse, or rotating to a virtual nurse assignment one or many days/weeks. • Specialty focus within unit – Many units have identified "champions" in focus areas such as diabetes education, wound care, infection prevention champions and other focus areas. Specialized education and assignments are part of the focus area responsibilities.

Nursing Retention Best Practice	Description
Healthy Work Environments	Creating healthy work environments is a way to improve the working experience for nurses in clinical care. Some frameworks to consider include AACN Critical Care's Healthy Work Environment (starting with the HWEAT) and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Pathway to Excellence standards.
Multi-generational Workplace Culture	This era in clinical care marks a time when there is the possibility of five generations of nurses working side by side. The evidence suggests that there are different drivers and needs of each generation of nurses, each with different motivators, drivers, and needs. Understanding these generational differences and tailoring retention strategies to each generational cohort is necessary to improve teams working well together. A table of the generational names is in the Resources for Nurse Leaders section of this toolkit. Nurse leaders must individualize efforts to retain an ethnically diverse and multi-generational nursing workforce.
Peer Networks and Cohort Models for New Nurses	As diversity in hiring improves, create a cohort model of new nurses that share the same hire date. Hold monthly support/ peer network meetings with the cohort led by a facilitator to create a safe space to share transition to practice stories; ask questions; support each other and create a peer network across units.
Developing Professional Autonomy and Accountability	Implement shared governance councils across the organization led by clinical nurses to influence practice. The Magnet® model and sources of evidence outline best practices for shared governance models. In addition to a clinical practice council at the unit levels, Nursing Workforce Councils are a strategy to discuss both recruitment and retention ideas that are led by clinical nurses.
Diversity Support/ DEIB Programs	The goal is to weave DEIB throughout the workplace as a foundation of all programs. Creating an effective nursing retention best practice centered on DEIB involves implementing structured, ongoing support programs that not only attract but also retain diverse nursing talent by fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture.
Keeping Informed – Monitoring and Evaluation	Nurse leaders should consider ongoing employee engagement surveys and action plans to keep a pulse on RN satisfaction and engagement. Consider including one of the "Sense of Belonging" measurement tools presented in Chapter II, Part B of this toolkit and develop action plans to improve sense of belonging in the workplace.

Let's Look at Nursing Manager Retention

We know from the evidence that the key to healthy work environments, positive clinical outcomes, employee engagement, and positive patient experience is directly related to the skills, knowledge, and attitude of the nurse manager. Yet nurse managers are also describing burnout, stress, and job dissatisfaction. As a profession, we need to focus on supporting the nurse manager in their role so that they can in turn care for their team (American Organization for Nursing Leadership, 2024). Here are some strategies that can support the nurse manager:

- Nurse manager leadership programs
- Support and wellness programs for nurse managers
- Assessing, evaluating and right-sizing manager span of control
- Succession planning
- Innovative models of care that include leadership roles and support
- Technology transformation to offload administrative and clerical functions from nurse managers
- Coaching on how to lead and meet generational needs of the nurse workforce (five generations of nurses working)

Nurse Manager Retention Strategies	
Strong nursing leadership/nurse manager strengthening	• Create a nurse manager onboarding program for newly promoted nurse managers or nurse managers hired from an outside organization. This leadership strategy can include orientation to all leadership roles, including charge nurse, assistant nurse manager, supervisor, nurse manager and director. • Encourage that nurse managers hold open forums on a regular basis with their clinical staff to obtain feedback and check in. • 1:1 touch base with all clinicians on a routine basis. • Leadership rounding on staff – using appreciative inquiry skills, ask, "What is going well today?" to obtain positive feedback from clinicians.

IV. Culture of Belonging

A. Measuring a Culture of Belonging

A sense of belonging is an outcome of an inclusive environment and can be measured to determine whether clinicians feel like they belong. The results can be impacted by the structures and processes that are in place to create an inclusive environment and foster a sense of belonging. For example, do you have policies and practices in place that support an inclusive environment? Measuring the culture of belonging should be part of the initial assessment and then occur on a regular basis to determine progress towards belonging and feeling a sense of inclusion.

The assessment of your organization's current state needs to be based on the outcome metrics you are hoping to achieve. In this way, your measurement can be based on the same evaluation metrics, and you can track progress across time.

As you use a measurement tool to determine the sense of belonging, you can include the measures as an outcome measure of success. It is possible to link sense of belonging rates to turnover and vacancy. As a belonging measure is added to your data set, this data can be analyzed by demographic data to further drill down into areas that may need improvement.

These are metrics that should be considered to evaluate the impact of a sense of belonging on your turnover rates and retention success.

- **Retention Metrics**: Track turnover rates and exit interview data to identify patterns and areas for improvement.
- **Engagement Surveys**: Conduct regular surveys to gauge job satisfaction and sense of belonging among nurses.
- **Diversity Audits**: Review recruitment and retention data to assess the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion efforts.

B. Belonging Measurement Tools

These five evidence-based questionnaires are recommended for measuring a sense of belonging. A description of each of the measurement tools follows.

1. **Sense of Belonging Instrument (SOBI)**; (Hagerty-Patusky, 1995)

   The SOBI is a 27-item self-report measure that consists of two distinct scales, the SOBI-P (psychological state) and the SOBI-A (antecedents). This instrument measures sense of belonging and the conditions necessary to foster a sense of belonging.

2. **Belongingness Scale-Clinical Placement Experience** (Levett-Jones et al., 2009)

   A 34-item instrument designed to measure the extent to which nursing students experience belongingness related to their clinical placements.

3. **The General Belongingness Scale (GBS)** (Malone, Pillow, Osman, 2012)

   A 12-item measure to assess a sense of general belongingness. It is deemed to measure achieved belongingness, distinct from the need to belong. Used in collegiate samples.

4. **Climate for Inclusion Scale** (Nishii, 2013)

   The Climate for Inclusion Scale (CIS) is a tool used to measure the inclusiveness of organizational climates, particularly in terms of how well they foster a sense of belonging, value, and respect for diversity among employees. The scale is based on the concept of "inclusive climate", which refers to the organizational environment where individuals, regardless of their background, feel included and treated fairly. The tool measures 16 items. These items are designed to capture various aspects of organizational climate related to inclusion, such as fair treatment, respect, diversity support, and equal opportunities.

5. **Challenged Sense of Belonging Scale (CSBS)** (Fuchs et al., 2021)

   Uses items from the Sense of Belonging Index (SOBI) and the Social Connectedness Scale (SCS) and self-made items, this scale measures four key elements: connection, participation, identification, and congruence. Self-made items refer to survey or scale questions that are specifically created by researchers or practitioners to address aspects of a construct that are not fully captured by existing standardized instruments. These items are tailored to meet the unique needs of the study or evaluation and may be informed by theoretical frameworks, qualitative data, or practical considerations.

   The purpose of the scale is to "identify instances of challenged or lacking belonging with respect to a particular context" (Fuchs et al., 2021, p.4). The scale was developed for refugees who must be successfully re-oriented to new social and cultural environments to socially integrate and attain psychological well-being.

C. Creation of a Dashboard

One way to assess if implemented strategies are successful is through the creation of a Recruitment and Retention Dashboard that is updated on a regular basis. This dashboard needs to be at the organization level and drill down to the unit level. The data elements need to include a multitude of variables (listed in Table V) and should include a measure of the sense of belonging. An example of a visual dashboard, APP Patient Volume Dashboard, is available in Appendix C.

Measuring the sense of belonging should be included in your measurement dashboard that includes:

Table V: Dashboard Variables

DASHBOARD VARIABLES
Overall organization-wide data
Overall RN vacancy rate
Overall RN turnover rates
RN turnover rates overall < two years
Demographic breakdown of hires by race, gender, ethnicity, age, and years of experience overall
Overall RN employee engagement scores
Overall RN sense of belonging score
Unit-level data
Unit-level RN vacancy rate
Unit-level RN turnover rate
RN turnover rates < two years by unit
Demographic breakdown of hires by race, gender, ethnicity, age, and years of experience by unit
Unit-level RN employee engagement scores
Unit-level RN sense of belonging score

When evaluating this data, consider engaging DEIB and engagement experts; focus on scores within different categories of RNs, and look at belonging or engagement scores by demographic to see if there are differences in employee experience and levels of engagement.

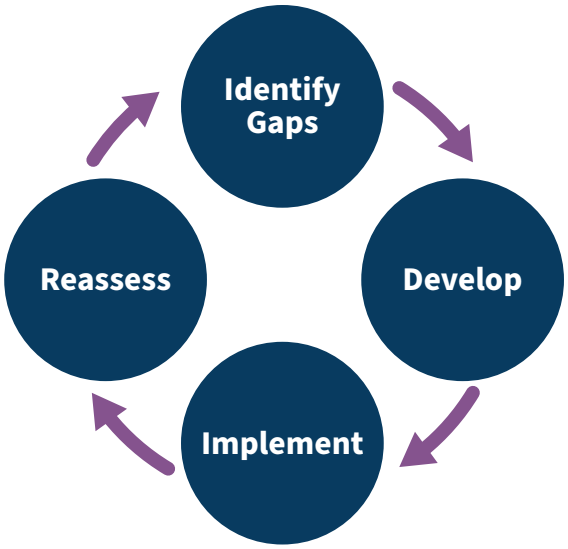
D. Gaps in Belonging

Despite efforts to foster inclusive environments, gaps remain that can hinder the sense of belonging among nursing staff. These gaps often include:

- Lack of representation: Insufficient representation of minority groups in leadership positions can perpetuate a lack of role models and mentors for diverse nurses.
- Implicit bias: Unconscious biases can affect hiring and promotion decisions, as well as day-to-day interactions, leading to feelings of exclusion.
- Cultural insensitivity: A lack of understanding and respect for diverse cultural practices can create an unwelcoming environment for minority nurses.

E. Implications for Nurse Leaders

A lot of responsibility rests on the nurse leaders and nurse executives to create an environment where all nurses feel a sense of belonging, which will lead to a more stable workforce environment, where RN turnover is minimal, and the RN vacancy rate is low. Conducting an assessment and identifying the gaps in the recruitment and retention processes and structures is the first step in changing the workplace culture to create a sense of belonging for all nurses. The process of assessment, identifying gaps, developing, and then implementing a plan to improve each nurse's sense of belonging will ultimately lead to improved nurse and patient outcomes. The nurse leader is key to improving that culture of belonging.



Most, if not all, of the strategies will only succeed if the nurse leader is fully vested in supporting and sustaining changes. Additionally, working strategically to obtain executive level support across the C-suite is necessary to invest in these activities.

Nurse leaders will first need to educate themselves as to why creating a sense of belonging is important, and what benefits will be created. Nurses who feel a strong sense of belonging are more likely to stay in their roles, reducing the cost of turnover. Additionally, stress and burnout are likely to be lower as peer support is present. The evidence shows that a strong sense of belonging in the workplace results in higher job satisfaction and engagement leading to improved patient outcomes.

Nurse leaders will need to prioritize the work culture and the creation of a sense of belonging as a strategic priority. Strong two-way communication channels, intentional efforts to assure each nurse feels valued, and promoting a supportive environment are all activities that nurse leaders need to actively support. Leaders will need to focus on recognition and appreciation, celebration of team achievements on a regular basis, and encouraging peer-to-peer acknowledgement of contributions to excellence in patient care.

Ultimately, diversity, inclusion and belonging create a richer, more innovative workplace where all team members feel that they belong. The leaders need to commit to developing and sustaining equitable hiring practices, support new team members, and promote a culture where all perspectives are welcome.

Nurse leaders will need to hold their team members accountable for the actions agreed upon. Project management skills will be required in many of the program implementation activities. There will be a need to consistently track and monitor progress and communicate broadly to all stakeholders on the progress and support needed to be successful.

By prioritizing a sense of belonging in both recruitment and retention efforts, the work experience for all nurses improves. This will lead to long-term positive impacts on the nurses, and ultimately the patients being served.

V. Exemplars from the Field

These exemplars were collected from the field in 2024 and highlight case studies of organizations that have implemented programs and strategies to improve both nurse recruitment and retention.

Category: Nursing Orientation

Apprenticeship Model for Nurse Onboarding

Edna Cadmus, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN
Executive Director, NJCCN, New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing
Clinical Professor Rutgers University

The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health (2011) recommended all nurses be afforded a nurse residency program due to the complexity of care. The New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing's (NJCCN) mission is to ensure that competent, future-oriented, diverse nursing providers are available in sufficient numbers and preparation to meet the demand of the evolving health care system in New Jersey. Since 2020, we have worked with 22 hospitals in New Jersey to offer a standardized approach using the Vizient/AACN model supporting new entry-level nurses as they transition into practice. The competency-based model ensures 144 hours of instruction/integration using case studies, gaming, and clinical reflections along with 2,000 hours of precepted and mentored time. This program provides them with the foundation needed to pursue their goals as well as grow their confidence and competence. New Jersey is one of four states centralizing their approach to transitioning new nurses into practice. To that end we have also evaluated the effectiveness of the program using the Casey Fink Graduate Nurse Experience Survey, along with turnover rates. We have seen an increase in confidence and competence over the 12 months along with a reduced turnover rate. Since the inception of the program, we have had an 11% turnover rate as compared to a national turnover rate of 23.8% for first year RN turnover. It is estimated that for every 1% change in turnover, an organization can save/lose $262,544 (Nursing Solutions Inc, 2024). As a result of this program, several of our hospitals have become ANCC PTAP certified with several more on their journey. While recruitment is important, retention is key. Helping them develop their professional goals for their next phase in their career is key to success.

Figure: Word cloud representing feedback from new graduates participating in the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing's Acute Care Nurse Residency Program.

Nurse residents were asked what advice they would give those just beginning their career; here are two comments:

"At the beginning it may seem hard, and like it doesn't get any easier, but it does. As time goes on things start to fall into place and make sense. Just give it time, and do not give up on your goals."

"ASK everything. Never let anything be of question. Ask and learn because it's better to ask and know than to wonder."

Multi-Faceted Recruitment and Retention Strategies

MedStar Health Best Practice for RN Retention and Recruitment

According to MedStar Health, offering meaningful, hands-on internship and externship opportunities that provide clinical experience while fostering a connection to MedStar's mission and values. Treat student nurses as employees by integrating them into the care team and providing support equivalent to full-time staff. This enhances their sense of belonging and investment in the organization.

Using technology to target potential recruits through social media platforms and dynamic/interactive ads. Develop marketing materials showcasing MedStar Health as a top employer through testimonials, highlighting work culture, professional growth, and benefits. Incorporating features for personalized candidate queries and a dynamic career page with real-time digital content, including success stories from current employees.

Retention is integrated into the annual operating plan, making it a central organizational goal. The executive committee, including the CEO and Board of Directors, provides oversight and ensures alignment between leadership and staff in addressing retention challenges. Regularly monitoring and reporting on RN retention and turnover, with specific attention to the diversity of staff and alignment with the patient population's diversity. Data is used to assess the success of recruitment efforts and workforce diversity goals.

A shared decision-making model is in place where nurses actively participate in governance, influencing policies and processes that directly affect their work environment. Establish mentorship opportunities that begin early in the hiring process, with ongoing mentorship to support new nurses through their first years at MedStar. Frequent, structured conversations with nurses at key intervals (30, 60, 90, 120 days, and annually) to understand their experiences, address concerns, and reinforce a sense of belonging. Provide access to well-being resources, such as specialized coaches and wellness programs, to promote work-life balance, mental health, and resilience. Regular engagement sessions with CNOs and senior nursing leadership, offering nurses an opportunity to speak directly with decision-makers and influence organizational decisions.

As part of the hiring process, diversity metrics are tracked to ensure that the staff's diversity mirrors the patient population. This ensures that the care provided is culturally competent and inclusive. Ongoing evaluation of workforce diversity to ensure alignment with goals, including regular reporting to stakeholders and using the data to inform recruitment and retention strategies.

This exemplar incorporates multiple layers of recruitment and retention efforts across different care settings and emphasizes strategic leadership engagement, workforce diversity, staff well-being, and professional development.

Category: Professional Development for Nephrology Nurses

RN Recruitment and Retention Exemplar

American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA)

Primary Challenge: Decreasing membership year-over-year amid an increasing demand for nephrology nurses. **Goal**: Improve recruitment and retention of nephrology nurses by fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) while addressing systemic barriers.

Recruitment Strategies: ANNA convened a Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) roundtable to discuss the evolving needs of nephrology nurses and gather insights from health care leaders across the field. Executive leadership, including the Executive Director and ANNA President, held listening sessions with members to understand their concerns, challenges, and needs. To attract new talent, ANNA implemented a mentoring program targeting student nurses, providing guidance and professional development early in their careers. To reduce financial barriers and promote early engagement in nephrology nursing, ANNA waived membership fees for student nurses. ANNA built strategic partnerships with nephrology-related organizations to enhance its recruitment efforts and connect with a broader network of health care professionals. A targeted membership drive was initiated, focusing on both recruiting new members and re-engaging lapsed members through various outreach efforts.

Retention Strategies: ANNA adopted a comprehensive DEIB strategy, creating a more inclusive culture where everyone feels represented and valued. This included forming a DEIB steering committee and incorporating education on DEIB principles at all organizational levels, from the board to individual members. Ongoing listening sessions were conducted to gather feedback on how to retain current members and address issues affecting their experience within the organization. Length of membership was analyzed to identify patterns of turnover, and efforts were made to address any recurring issues that contributed to membership decline.

The organization measured success by evaluating how well the membership demographics align with the diverse nephrology patient population, reinforcing the need for a workforce that reflects the communities served.

ANNA recognized the need to build long-term, sustainable processes, ensuring recruitment and retention efforts are adaptable to future challenges. Some members were not initially clear on the rationale behind the DEIB strategy, underscoring the need for continued education and communication efforts. Through a combination of listening, DEIB initiatives, mentorship, and strategic partnerships, ANNA is working to reverse membership decline and position itself as an organization that attracts and retains diverse talent for the nephrology nursing profession.

RN Recruitment and Retention in Home-Based Care

Our House Home Care, New Bern, NC

Personalized Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Use social media platforms to attract nurses, highlighting the flexibility, personal satisfaction, and impact they can have in home care. Showcase testimonials from current nurses to build trust and appeal to potential recruits. Promote opportunities for nurses from varied specialties (e.g., geriatric care, rehabilitation, chronic disease management) to apply their expertise in a home-based care setting. Highlight flexible scheduling as a key benefit to attract nurses seeking better work-life balance.

Offer reimbursement for mileage to ensure nurses are compensated for their travel time, which is often a major consideration in home-based care. Provide monetary incentives such as bonuses during Nurses Day and Christmas, recognizing nurses' contributions and efforts throughout the year. Ensure the pay structure is competitive with other home-based care providers, with regular assessments of market compensation trends.

Foster an environment where nurses feel that their work is crucial and appreciated. Regular recognition of their efforts is important to increase job satisfaction. Offer training and development opportunities to enhance nurses' skills and foster career growth within the home-based care setting.

Conduct regular stay interviews to understand what motivates nurses to stay and address any concerns that might lead to turnover. This proactive approach allows nurses to feel heard and valued. Provide ongoing recognition of the unique challenges nurses face in home-based care, using forums like staff meetings or internal newsletters to celebrate successes and highlight outstanding service.

By implementing flexible schedules, competitive compensation, regular assessments of client needs, and strong supervisory support, Our House Home Care can foster a supportive and satisfying environment for nurses, ensuring high retention and quality of care in a home-based setting.

This exemplar demonstrates a comprehensive approach to recruiting and retaining nurses who are committed to providing high-quality home care services, with an emphasis on flexibility, professional satisfaction, a sense of belonging and client-centered care.

Exemplar: RN Recruitment and Retention for Acute Care

Organization: WVU Medicine, Morgantown, West Virginia
Contact: Melanie Heuston, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Chief Nursing Executive, WVU Medicine Health System

WVU Medicine developed a unique Aspiring Nurse Program in collaboration with Schools of Nursing (SON) across the state. This program addresses social determinants of health (SDOH) by offering stipends to nursing students to cover life expenses in exchange for a work commitment post-graduation. This innovative approach helps combat the lack of nursing supply in both the local and state workforce. The program specifically targets diverse candidates to ensure that the nursing workforce reflects the population served. The partnership with local colleges provides mentorship opportunities, preferred clinical rotations, and a focus on medical-surgical nursing, which aligns students with in-demand nursing specialties.

The development of the Center for Nursing Education, including a hospital-based diploma program, emphasizes an intensive clinical experience. This center complements traditional nursing school recruitment by offering an accelerated pathway with clinical ladder opportunities.

To broaden reach and visibility, a strategic advertising and media exposure campaign highlights improved career advancement opportunities at WVU Medicine, with a special focus on clinical ladder promotions and financial rewards for mentoring and training new nurses. The revision of the clinical ladder is aimed at improving mentorship, training, and recognition of nurses who dedicate time to mentoring nursing students and new nurses. This structured reward system accelerates career advancement and financial opportunities, which are particularly attractive to early-career nurses.

The work-life balance program is designed to retain senior nurses by offering flexible scheduling options and recognition of their contributions. This initiative seeks to address burnout and incentivize seasoned nurses to remain in the workforce while mentoring newer staff. WVU Medicine has established a shared decision-making governance structure, empowering nursing managers at the frontline to lead communication efforts and ensure transparency regarding salary changes and career development opportunities.

The Casey-Fink tool, used to assess new graduate nurse transition to practice, has been implemented system-wide. The tool helps monitor early career turnover and satisfaction at regular intervals (e.g., every 6 months), allowing WVU Medicine to adapt strategies to improve retention based on real-time data. A system team has been developed to focus on the transition from student to practicing nurse. This team works to ensure smooth onboarding, mentorship, and development through group ideation, feedback loops, and continuous cascading communication from leadership.

WVU Medicine has allocated over $10 million to improve recruitment and retention for its 25-hospital system. This financial investment focuses on decreasing reliance on agency staff, reducing turnover, and improving nurse satisfaction. Efforts have been made to revise the clinical ladder while carefully considering salary compression and the impact on exempt roles, such as nursing education and leadership. The initiative includes financial and incentive-driven strategies to attract and retain inpatient nurses, competing with outpatient and entry-level exempt roles that may otherwise pull talent away from acute care settings.

To inspire future generations of nurses, WVU Medicine plans to reintroduce the concept of “Candy Striper” volunteering, but with a modern twist. This initiative will use technology to offer younger individuals an immersive experience in health care, exposing them to the nursing field.

A primary goal of WVU Medicine’s recruitment and retention strategy is to improve 1- to 3-year turnover rates. Success will be measured through improvements in nurse satisfaction scores (e.g., Press Ganey surveys)

and baseline Casey-Fink evaluations at prescribed intervals. Nurse engagement scores are currently under review, with future initiatives aimed at improving the sense of acknowledgment and satisfaction for bedside nurses, particularly those involved in training new staff. Continuous feedback from nurses at all levels is used to adapt the program, ensuring that recruitment and retention strategies remain relevant and effective.

The strategy also acknowledges the importance of addressing generational differences in the workforce, providing tailored support to both early-career and senior nurses to ensure retention across age groups. Based on the success of the inpatient model, WVU Medicine is considering adapting a similar recruitment and retention model for outpatient roles and other health care disciplines, ensuring a comprehensive approach across the system.

WVU Medicine's approach to RN recruitment and retention emphasizes diversity, mentorship, and financial investment to address regional challenges such as the lack of supply and high turnover. The Aspiring Nurse Program and Center for Nursing Education ensure a strong pipeline of future nurses, while enhanced clinical ladder opportunities, shared decision-making, and work-life balance initiatives create an environment where nurses are valued and supported. These strategies, combined with continuous improvement and real-time feedback, make WVU Medicine a leader in nurse recruitment and retention in acute care settings.

VI. Resources for Nurse Leaders

Resources for nursing leaders as they work to develop recruitment and retention plans are outlined below.

1. Professional Development, Mentorship, and Belonging

These resources help nurses feel supported in their career growth, which strengthens their sense of belonging and commitment to their workplace. Professional development opportunities and mentorship programs are vital in boosting nurse retention by creating pathways for advancement, providing role models, and fostering a supportive community.

- **Nursing Retention Toolkit – Government of Canada**
  This toolkit provides structured resources on career development, mentorship, and work-life balance specifically designed to improve nursing retention. It includes strategies that Canadian health care institutions use to support nurses' career growth and address their unique challenges.

  https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/health-care-system/health-human-resources/nursing-retention-toolkit-improving-working-lives-nurses/nursing-retention-toolkit-improving-working-lives-nurses.pdf

- **Healthy Work Environment Assessment Tool (HWEAT)**
  HWEAT is a survey-based tool that evaluates workplace factors influencing nurse well-being and engagement. It's a valuable resource for identifying areas for improvement, which can directly impact retention by fostering an environment where nurses feel supported and included. The tool, created by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, can be found online and downloaded.

  https://www.aacn.org/nursing-excellence/healthy-work-environments/aacn-healthy-work-environment-assessment-tool

- **American Institute of CPAs National Commission on Diversity and Inclusion Recruitment and Retention Toolkit**
  Though originally designed for the accounting profession, this toolkit offers valuable DEI resources, such as inclusion strategies, mentorship ideas, and recruitment practices, which can be adapted to health care settings. Implementing these ideas can create a more inclusive workplace, helping to retain a diverse nursing workforce. The toolkit can be accessed online.

  https://us.aicpa.org/content/dam/aicpa/career/diversityinitiatives/downloadabledocuments/recruitment-retention-toolkit.pdf

- **The ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP)**
  Sets the global standard for residency or fellowship programs that transition registered nurses (RNs).

  https://www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/accreditation/ptap/

- **The Magnet Recognition Program**
  Designates organizations worldwide where nursing leaders successfully align their nursing strategic goals to improve the organization's patient outcomes. The Magnet Recognition Program provides a roadmap to nursing excellence, which benefits the whole of an organization.

  https://www.nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/magnet/

2. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, (DEI) and Health Equity

DEI and health equity resources provide guidance on creating a supportive work environment that values diversity, encourages equity, and promotes inclusive practices. These resources are essential for retention, as they address the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups and contribute to a culture of respect and inclusion.

- **AARP Health Equity Toolkit**
  This toolkit focuses on building coalitions and community partnerships to advance health equity. It includes strategies for addressing social determinants of health and implementing equitable practices in health care settings. A commitment to health equity improves nurse retention by aligning organizational values with those of diverse nurses. The toolkit is available online.

  https://campaignforaction.org/resource/equity-toolkit/

- **Recruitment and Retention Toolkit – A Journey Toward a More Inclusive Workforce**
  This toolkit provides resources on building a diverse workforce, including recruitment strategies and retention practices that are particularly inclusive of populations under-represented in the profession. Applying these practices in nursing strengthens retention by fostering an environment where all nurses feel valued and supported. The toolkit *Recruitment and Retention Toolkit – A Journey Toward a More Inclusive Workforce* by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is available on their website.

  www.cdc.gov/niosh

3. Career and Retirement Planning

Ensuring nurses have resources for career planning, financial security, and retirement is crucial for retention, especially as they progress in their careers. Tools in this category support nurses in mapping out their long-term professional paths and securing their futures, which can increase loyalty to their organization.

- **Retirement Planning Tools**
  These tools from AARP include resources for financial planning, retirement benefits information, and pension guidance. Offering these resources signals to nurses that their long-term well-being is valued and supported by the organization.

  https://elearn.aarp.org/URL/PrepareYourFinancesAheadofRetirement

- **Professional Development and Continuing Education Programs**
  Access to continuing education opportunities helps nurses advance their skills and prepare for senior roles. Organizations that support career-long learning encourage nurses to stay by promoting career growth and professional satisfaction. (See Appendix D).

4. Work-Life Balance and Well-Being Support

Nurses often face high levels of stress, making it essential to provide resources that support work-life balance, mental health, and physical wellness. When organizations prioritize well-being, it strengthens the connection nurses feel to their workplace, which is critical for retention. (See Appendix D).

- **Well-Being and Mental Health Resources**
  Resources such as counseling, peer support programs, and wellness initiatives tailored to the needs of health care professionals help mitigate burnout. Offering these resources creates a supportive culture that acknowledges the stressors nurses face and offers solutions for managing them.

- **Flexible Work Arrangements and Family Support**
  Resources that include flexible scheduling options, family support policies, and accommodations for work-life balance enhance nurse satisfaction and improve retention by aligning work demands with personal needs.

5. Student Loan Repayment Support

Supporting nurses with student loan repayment resources can have a significant impact on retention, especially among younger nurses and those from underrepresented backgrounds who may carry substantial debt. This financial relief allows them to focus more fully on their careers and reduces turnover associated with financial stress.

The SAVI tool is a resource designed to help nurses navigate options for student loan repayment, especially for those working in nonprofit health care settings where they may qualify for federal loan forgiveness programs. The tool simplifies the application process, calculates potential savings, and provides ongoing support to manage repayment plans effectively. Offering access to this tool can alleviate financial pressures, improve job satisfaction, and enhance retention by helping nurses feel financially supported by their employer.

Information about the SAVI tool is available online.

https://www.aarp.org/money/credit-loans-debt/student-loan/

Conclusion

These resources together provide a comprehensive approach to supporting nurse retention by addressing key areas: career development, DEIB, financial security, and well-being. By organizing these resources within a toolkit, we hope to equip organizations to proactively support nurses and meet their professional and personal needs. Each section addresses a vital aspect of retention, ultimately contributing to a sustainable, resilient, and diverse nursing workforce.

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VIII. Appendices

Appendix A. Glossary: Key Concepts and Definitions

***Cultural Humility*:** Involves an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique with a willingness to learn from others. It means entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs, and values. It means acknowledging differences and accepting the person for who they are. (Soundscaping Source, 2013).

Key attributes of cultural humility include: openness, self-reflection/awareness, lifelong learning, institutional accountability, empathy, and compassion, "other orientated," and acknowledging power imbalances and balancing power imbalances. (Wheeler, 2018).

Soundscaping Source, LLC. (2013). Cultural humility vs. cultural competence. https://soundscapingsource.com/cultural-humility-vs-cultural-competence/

Wheeler, M. (2018). Cultural competence and cultural humility: A literature review for understanding and action. http://www.tripartners.com/Downloads/Session2/CCC_Humility_032018.pdf

***Cultural Responsiveness*:** Means being "open to new ideas that may conflict with the ideas, beliefs, and values of your own culture, and being able to see these differences as equal . . . It means being respectful of everyone's backgrounds, beliefs, values, customs, knowledge, lifestyle, and social behaviors . . . cultural responsiveness involves continuous learning, self-exploration, and reflection. It draws on a number of concepts including cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural safety, and cultural competence." (New South Wales Agency for Clinical Innovation, 2023).

https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/consumer-enablement/how-to-support-enablement/culturally-responsive-practice

***Diversity*:** "'The multiplicity of human differences among groups of people or individuals. Increasing diversity means enhancing one's ability to recognize, understand, and respect the differences that may exist between groups and individuals. Increasing diversity in the health care workforce requires recognition of many other dimensions, including but not limited to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, cultural background, socio-economic status, disabilities, and language' (The National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2013). Fostering diversity involves building an atmosphere of inclusiveness" (American Nurses Credentialing Center, 2023 Magnet Application Manual, p. 188).

https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/nursing/reports/2013-eleventhreport.pdf

https://www.nursingworld.org/nurses-books/2023-magnet-application-manual2/

***Inclusion*:** The act of including someone or something as part of a group, list etc.; the act of allowing many different types of people to do something and treating them fairly and equally (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/inclusion

In its Diversity and Inclusion statement, the American Nurses Association writes: "Inclusion is more than a buzzword—it's a daily practice. We foster an inclusive workplace where everyone feels heard, seen, and valued. We actively listen, learn, and adapt to create an environment where all voices matter." https://www.nursingworld.org/content-hub/resources/workplace/DEIB-Commitment-Statement/

Belonging: Belonging is the *qualitative* perspective of inclusion (Merrill, K.C.) It is often described as "feeling valued, needed, and in alignment with the values or goals of a group or organization. Belonging is distinct from but related to the concepts of diversity and inclusion and requires workplaces to intentionally welcome individuals from traditionally excluded groups" (Silver, J.K., Ellinas, E.H., & Augustus-Wallace, 2024, p.1). Merrill, K.C. (2024). Gray Areas (Belonging is the new DEI concept.
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***Recruitment*:** the process of finding people to work for a company or becoming a new member of an organization. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/recruitment

***Retention*:** the ability of a company to keep its employees and stop them from going to work somewhere else. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/retention

Appendix B. Reviews of Selected Promising Practices

This appendix shares "deep dives" into three promising practices that help with both recruitment and retention of nurses. These are presented as a resource for organizations considering implementing these strategies and include:

1. *Summer Nurse Extern Programs*

Nursing student summer extern programs are excellent opportunities for nursing students to gain practical, hands-on experience in a clinical setting. These programs typically take place during the summer months and allow students to work alongside experienced nurses and other health care professionals, providing direct patient care while learning and refining essential nursing skills.

Selected Key Features of Nursing Student Extern Programs:

a. **Duration:** Typically, 8-12 weeks during the summer.

b. **Eligibility**: Nursing students who have completed at least one clinical rotation (usually entering their final year or have completed their second year of a four-year program).

c. **Location**: Hospitals, health care systems, and specialized health care facilities. Most often, hospitals partner with local universities and colleges to recruit nursing students who are interested in summer employment.

d. **Mentorship**: Students are paired with experienced registered RNs who act as mentors throughout the program.

e. **Areas of Practice**: Externs work in various departments, such as medical-surgical units, intensive care, emergency departments, maternity wards, and more, depending on their interests and the institution's offerings. Often the hospital encourages student nurse externs in high need areas to ensure a pipeline of new nurses with some experience in the clinical area.

f. **Skills Development**: Provides an opportunity to practice clinical skills allowed by the BON in each state such as vital signs and assessment, patient care, and ADLs, and under the supervision of a licensed nurse externs can administer medications, conduct patient assessment, wound care, and other nursing activities. Many organizations create a "Nurse Extern" job description that has been deemed appropriate by human resources and the state BON.

g. **Networking**: Helps students build connections within the hiring health care organization, often leading to job opportunities after graduation. Additionally, opportunities to be involved in local and regional activities are offered.

h. **Compensation**: Many programs offer a stipend or hourly pay, although some may be unpaid or offer course credit. Some organizations create work opportunities after the summer for nurse externs to continue working, either in a nurse extern role or a tech or CNA role.

2. *Dedicated Education Units*

Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) are innovative clinical teaching models designed to improve the training experience of nursing students and support new graduate nurses as they transition into professional practice. The DEU model is a partnership between academic institutions and health care facilities, aimed at enhancing the clinical learning environment. It allows new nurses to gain real-world experience under the guidance of experienced staff in a structured yet dynamic setting.

The main features of a dedicated education unit include:

a. **Structured Clinical Environment**

- Designated Units for Learning: DEUs are specific units within health care facilities that are designated as teaching units. The staff in these units are specifically trained to provide clinical education to nursing students and new graduates.

- Collaboration with educational institutions: Nursing schools collaborate with health care facilities to ensure that the educational curriculum aligns with the real-world clinical practices. This ensures that new nurses experience a seamless transition from theory to practice.

b. Experienced Clinical Instructors (Clinical Facilitators/Clinical Nurse Educators)

- Consistent Preceptorship: In DEUs, new nurses are paired with experienced nurses who serve as clinical instructors. These instructors are trained to teach and evaluate students while also providing patient care. The consistency of working with the same nurse educator helps new nurses build confidence and competence in clinical skills.

c. Integration of Theory and Practice

- Evidence-Based Practice: DEUs focus on integrating classroom learning with clinical practice, ensuring that new nurses apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. This hands-on experience strengthens critical thinking and clinical decision-making skills.
- Frequent Communication and feedback: Students and new nurses in DEUs often receive frequent, real-time feedback on their performance, helping them to identify areas of improvement and to develop clinical competence more rapidly.

d. Transition to Practice Strategies

- Transition to Practice: DEUs play a key role in helping new graduate nurses transition into the workforce. By working closely with experienced nurses, new graduates develop not only clinical skills but also professional competencies such as time management, prioritization, and interprofessional collaboration.
- Confidence Building: New nurses often experience high levels of stress and anxiety when starting their careers. The structured support and mentoring they receive in a DEU help reduce this stress and build confidence in their abilities.
- Job Readiness: Nurses who complete their training in a DEU are often better prepared to take on independent patient care roles more quickly than those trained in traditional clinical settings. Often organizations use the Casey-Fink assessment tool which is designed to evaluate transition to practice program outcomes, measures new graduate experiences, assesses RN readiness to practice, and identifies factors that affect nurse retention. (https://www.caseyfinksurveys.com/)

Dedicated Education Units (DEU) help bridge the gap between nursing education and clinical practice, ensuring that new nurses are better prepared for the realities of patient care. By integrating transition from formal education into clinical practice, the DEU Model helps new nurses build confidence, enhance their clinical skills, and transition smoothly into their professional roles. This model helps reduce the "reality shock" that many new nurses experience when transitioning from school to practice, results in lower turnover in the first two years of practice, and ultimately impacts nursing retention.

3. *Strategy Map for Partnering with Minority Serving Institutions*

A mutually beneficial strategic partnership with minority serving institutions (MSIs) to recruit under-represented nursing students can help address disparities in the nursing profession by improving diversity across race, ethnicity, gender, and age. This strategy aims to bridge gaps in representation while fostering a workforce that mirrors the demographics of the communities being served. Here are some guidelines for building a strategic partnership with a minority serving institution.

a. Build Collaborative Relationships with Minority Serving Institutions

- Identify and Partner with MSIs: Develop mutual goals and objectives with minority serving institutions that benefit the organization and the nursing students. Identify needs that can be met between both organizations. Establish relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and

Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs). Identify nursing programs within these schools and engage faculty and administrators. Create joint collaboratives with faculty and nursing service leaders to create joint goals and desired outcomes.

- Create a formal collaboration: Work to develop formal agreements that outline the partnership's goals, including support for career development, mentorship, and employment pathways for under-represented students.

b. Develop Pipeline Programs for Nursing Students

Some examples of pipeline programs include the following:

- Emerging Career Pathway: Develop programs that introduce high school students from under-represented communities to the nursing profession. This can be achieved through outreach to high schools that feed into Minority Serving Institutions, offering health-related summer programs, and participating in health education fairs.
- Educational Support Programs: Collaborate with MSIs to design bridge programs that provide nursing students with access to scholarships, internships, clinical experiences, and preparatory courses for NCLEX-RN licensing exams. These programs can reduce attrition and support education completion.
- Support Career Pathways: Jointly create and offer career guidance, mentorship, and skill-building workshops for students nearing graduation to prepare them for job interviews, licensing exams, and their transition into the workforce.

c. Offer Financial Support

- Scholarships and Grants: Work with federal, state, and private entities to offer scholarships for students under-represented in the profession. Financial assistance can be tied to commitments to work in underserved communities, adding both value and opportunity for students.
- Loan Forgiveness Programs: Establish or promote loan repayment programs, such as HRSA's Nurse Corps Scholarship Program, which forgives loans for nurses working in critical shortage areas, to attract MSI nursing graduates.
- Paid Internships and Fellowships: Offer paid clinical placements in hospitals and community health settings. This would reduce the financial burden and allow students to gain hands-on experience, particularly in health care environments where they are under-represented.

d. Foster Inclusive and Equitable Recruitment Initiatives

- Age-inclusive Campaigns: Tailor outreach campaigns to non-traditional students, such as older adults and those transitioning from other professions. Promote flexible class schedules, accelerated degree programs, and part-time work options that align with family and personal responsibilities.
- Recruit Male Nursing Students: Launch initiatives that welcome male students, including mentorship from male nurses, career workshops, and public awareness campaigns about men in nursing. Highlight the growing demand for male nurses in specific fields such as psychiatric, critical care, and emergency nursing.
- Promote Cultural Humility and Diversity: Provide training and workshops on cultural humility and inclusivity to hiring managers and HR personnel to remove potential bias and recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

e. Create Mentorship and Professional Development Opportunities

- Peer and Professional Mentorship: Establish mentorship programs pairing MSI nursing students with experienced nurses of similar backgrounds or interests. This mentorship can support professional growth, networking, and emotional support as students navigate career pathways.

- Leadership Development Programs: Offer leadership training programs that encourage students from diverse backgrounds to pursue leadership roles within health care. Focus on preparing under-represented groups for positions such as nurse managers, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and nursing faculty.
- Provide Wraparound Services: In collaboration with MSIs, provide comprehensive support services for nursing students, including mental health services, academic advising, tutoring, family services, transportation, living stipends, and career coaching.

f. Track and Evaluate Recruitment Outcomes

- Data Collection and Reporting: Establish mechanisms for collecting data on recruitment, retention, graduation, and employment of MSI nursing graduates. Track the demographic data to ensure recruitment goals for under-represented populations are being met.
- Continuous Improvement: Regularly assess the partnership and recruitment efforts through feedback from students, faculty, and health care employers. Adjust strategies based on changing demographics, workforce needs, and emerging challenges.

Health care organizations can strategically partner with minority-serving institutions and focus on recruitment, financial support, mentorship, and inclusivity, ultimately supporting the career development of a diverse nursing workforce. This will ultimately result in an improvement in health care outcomes for underserved populations.

Appendix C. Generational Differences in the Workplace

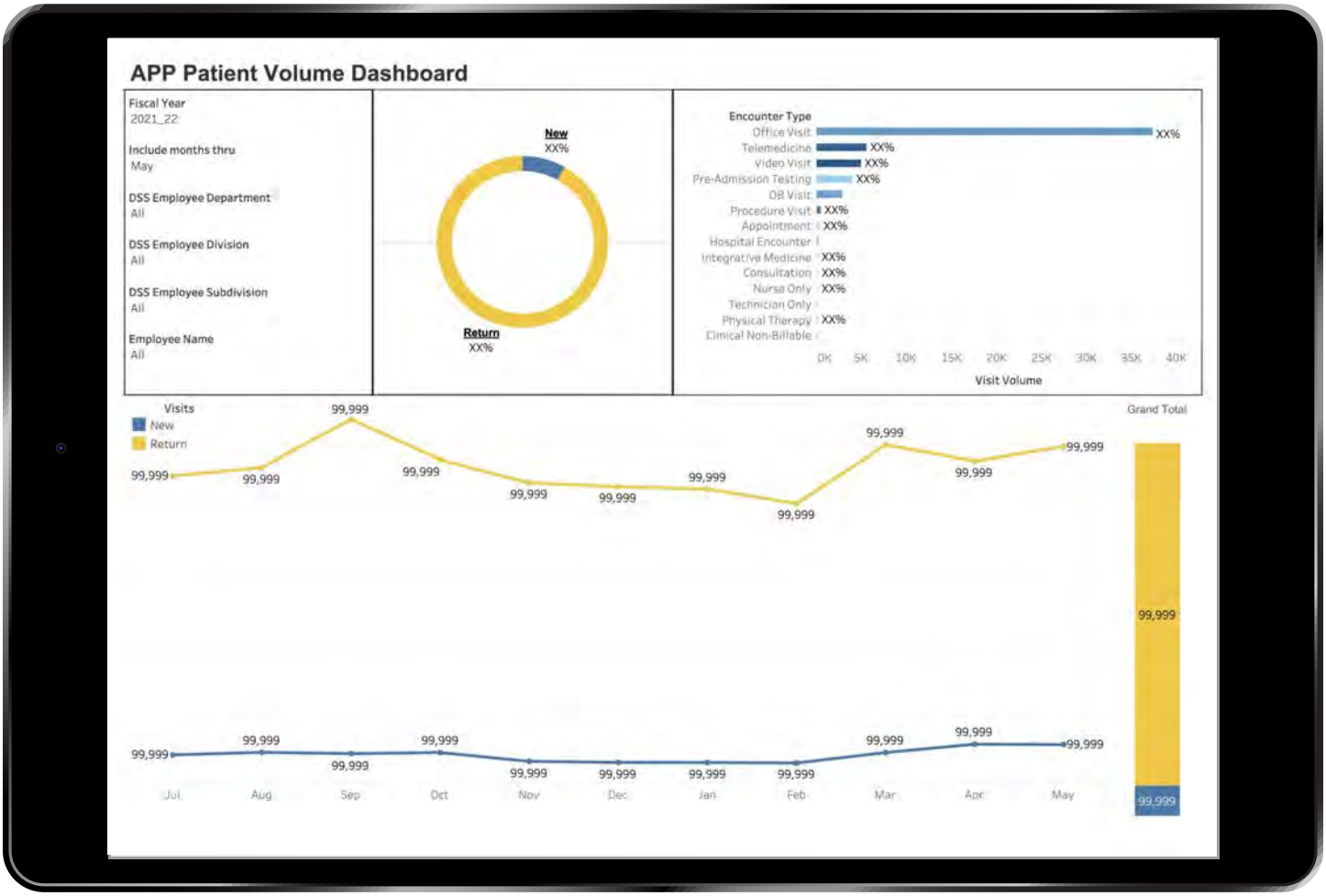
For the first time in history, there are five generations in the workplace. This table shares the description of each generation, and their worldview that shapes both their contributions and their expectations of the work experience. This information needs to be considered as strategies are developed to be inclusive of a multi-generational workforce and create a sense of belonging across the lifespan of a registered nurse.

Generational Differences in the workplace		
Name/ Year Born	Description	Worldview
The Silent Generation "Traditionalists" 1928–1945	Shaped by the Great Depression, WW2 motivated by respect, recognition, and long-term tenure to company; communicate via personal touch, handwritten notes	Obedience over individualism
Baby Boomers 1946–1964	Shaped by the Vietnam War, Civil rights movement, Watergate. Motivated by loyalty, teamwork, and duty communicate using most efficient method, including face-to-face or phone	Achievement comes after paying dues, sacrifice for success
Generation X 1965–1980	Shaped by the AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dot.com boom; motivated by work-life balance, diversity; communicate using most efficient means including face-to-face or phone	Diversity, work-life balance, personal interests over company interests
Millennials 1981–2000	Shaped by 9/11 and the emergence of the internet; motivated by increasing responsibility and unique work experiences; communicate through instant message, email and texts	Seek challenge and growth and a fun work life and work-life balance; quicker to leave a job they don't like
Generation Z 2001–2020	Shaped by a digital world, motivated by individuality and creativity; communicate through digital platforms and social media	Driven by digital world; like new technologies; value independence and individuality

Reference: Purdue Global, Generational Differences in the workplace, (2024) https://www.purdueglobal.edu/education-partnerships/generational-workforce-differences-infographic/ accessed 11.01.2024

Example of a visual dashboard

Hysong, SJ, Yang, C., Wong, J., Knox. MK, O;Mahen, P., Petersen, LA. (2023). Beyond Information Design: Designing Health Care Dashboards for Evidence-Driven Decision-Making, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10266903/pdf/10-1055-a-2068-6699.pdf, accessed 1.20.2025.



Reference for image: https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-022-08216-7, accessed 1.20.2025

Appendix D: Examples of Professional Development and Continuing Education Programs, Work-Life Balance and Well-Being Support, Well-Being and Mental Health Resources, and Flexible Work Arrangements and Family Support

1. Professional Development and Continuing Education Programs

- **American Nurses Association (ANA)**: Provides online and in-person continuing education courses, certification programs, and leadership training for nurses.
- **Sigma Theta Tau International (Sigma)**: Offers webinars, conferences, and specialty certifications in nursing leadership and research.
- **Nurse Residency Programs**: Designed for new graduates, these programs (e.g., Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Program) help transition nurses to practice through mentoring and clinical skill development.
- **University Partnerships**: Tuition reimbursement programs or partnerships with universities for advanced degrees (e.g., BSN, MSN, DNP).
- **LinkedIn Learning**: Offers courses on soft skills like communication, leadership, and time management for healthcare professionals.

2. Work-Life Balance and Well-Being Support

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)**: Provide confidential counseling, financial advice, and legal services to help employees manage personal and professional challenges.
- **Mindfulness Programs**: Organizations like *Headspace* and *Calm* partner with employers to offer mindfulness and stress reduction resources for healthcare workers.
- **Wellness Rooms**: Dedicated quiet spaces in hospitals or clinics for nurses to recharge during shifts, equipped with calming music, recliners, and aromatherapy.
- Time-Off Policies: Paid time off (PTO) banks, extended leave options, or wellness days to encourage rest and recovery.

3. Well-Being and Mental Health Resources

- **Peer Support Programs**: Initiatives like *Code Lavender* offer rapid-response emotional support for healthcare teams after traumatic events.
- **Mental Health Apps**: Partnerships with apps like *BetterHelp* or *Talkspace* provide access to licensed therapists online.
- **Onsite Counseling Services**: In-house mental health professionals available at hospitals to support staff with immediate needs.
- **Resilience Training**: Programs such as the *Duke Center for Healthcare Safety and Quality's Resilience Training for Nurses* teach coping mechanisms to handle workplace stress.
- **Burnout Prevention Training**: Tools like the Maslach Burnout Inventory paired with actionable strategies to mitigate burnout.

4. Flexible Work Arrangements and Family Support

- **Flexible Scheduling Platforms**: Apps like *ShiftMed* or *Nursa* allow nurses to pick shifts that fit their schedules.
- **Childcare Support**: Subsidized onsite childcare, partnerships with daycare centers, or stipends for childcare expenses.
- **Parental Leave Policies**: Expanded parental leave for new parents, including adoption and foster care.
- **Remote Work Options**: For roles in case management, telehealth, or utilization review, allowing nurses to work from home.

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