

A Nurse Residency Program's Impact on Nurse Retention and Turnover in a Rural Hospital: A Program Evaluation

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Abstract

Background: In a United States (U.S.) 2020 survey, 21.2% of new registered nurses (RNs) exited within the first year of employment. Consequences of high nurse turnover include fiscal costs to the hospital and adverse health care outcomes to the patient. Furthermore, nurse turnover antecedents, such as the nurse work environment and nurse satisfaction, are correlated with adverse patient outcomes. Successful interventions include approaches to foster a positive work environment where leadership and peer support are central elements.

Local Problem: To address nurse turnover, a rural hospital had implemented a Nurse Residency Program (NRP) in 2003; however, a formal program evaluation was lacking. The hospital's total nurse turnover rate between 2015 and 2018 ranged from 17% to 17.7%. The specific aim of this program evaluation is to assess the efficacy of the hospital's NRP.

Methods: The evaluation design using the Centers for Disease Control Framework for Program Evaluations was a retrospective, mixed-method cohort study.

Intervention: A program evaluation of the NRP was informed by Schlossberg's Transition Process, outcome, and impact evaluation was completed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Results: Survey data suggested that preceptor and manager support are leading influencers for successful NRP resident transition to independent practice.

Conclusion: Though the overall NRP experience of the resident may be considered supportive, a negative preceptee-preceptor relationship can adversely influence NRP objective attainment, transition, turnover, and retention. Enhanced preceptor support and other strategies may be necessary to help residents transition successfully.