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Executive Summary: Executive Leadership System Improvement

Improving Retention of Newly Hired Nurses in Home Care

by

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Summary

In the home care setting, there is an increasing need for home care services due to aging populations and the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, as well as a scarcity of qualified home care staff to meet the health needs of patients in this setting. A home care agency's onboarding program, particularly its capacity to deliver comprehensive orientation and robust mentoring for new nurses, plays a crucial role in supporting the retention of newly employed nursing staff within the home care environment. Research indicates that without ongoing support and close monitoring, newly hired nurses may disengage during the onboarding and transition process. Job satisfaction has been proven to be a significant factor influencing nurse retention, according to the literature. Other factors, such as poor orientation or lack of support during the onboarding process, as well as heavy workload, and hostile work environment, all have a significant impact on retention.

The organization's internal data reveal that the retention rate has consistently fallen below the organization's quarterly goal of 90% and annual goal of 85%. For the past 3 years, the average annual retention rate has remained below 70%. The purpose of this Executive Leadership Project is to evaluate whether the creation and implementation of a formal onboarding program for new hires in the home care setting will enhance staff engagement, resulting in increased satisfaction and improved retention.

Literature Review

Most research on nurse retention focuses on acute care, with less emphasis on home care settings. The limited available data show that certain traits have consistently been identified as strong predictors of nurse retention (Hu et al., 2020). Retention remains

a significant concern in the home care setting. Like acute care environments, it is essential to address this challenge to ensure continuity and quality of care. Some of the key drivers of retention issues in the home care setting include working in a dispersed environment, isolation, and limited physical interaction, which hinder collaboration and negatively impact uniformity and positive outcomes. Vleminckx et al. (2024) found that integrating quality improvement (QI) initiatives within the home care environment, utilizing established structures such as regular training sessions and team meetings, has yielded positive results. These include enhanced self-confidence, improved nurse-perceived quality of care, and increased stability in nurse retention. The effectiveness of this strategy is reflected in the positive data of the job satisfaction, intent to stay in the profession, as well as the intent to stay with the current employer. It is a testament to the implemented measures' ability to improve overall nursing practice, while fostering an inclusive, supportive, and more positive work environment (Vleminckx et. al., 2024).

Continuing nursing education (CNE) has been shown to significantly impact retention, not only in acute care settings but also in home care settings (Pavloff & Labrecque, 2021). Given the multiple clinical skills and high responsibilities expected of home care nurses, they need support with access to relevant continuing education to perform their job safely and efficiently. Home care nurses have a complex role and responsibility that requires full concentration and attention to ensure the safe provision of care. Thus, to maintain safe practice for patients and nurses, in addition to basic education for nurses, standard education must be designed to address the complex medical needs of patients while providing added value through accessibility. An improved CNE experience for home care nurses enhances nurse competence, reduces

nurse burnout, improves retention, improves patient safety, and leads to better overall clinical outcomes (Pavloff & Labrecque, 2021).

Initial Stakeholders

The following stake holders will be instrumental to the success of the project due to the key roles and expertise: (a) recruitment team—strategically source for qualified high quality nurses, seek feedback, and provide input; (b) quality department—provide data input, collaborate on QI plans, align project with the broader company quality initiatives; (c) nurses—provide feedback on personal experiences, share insight, and challenge, collaborate on plan to improve retention; (d) patients—provide feedback on personal experiences; (e) finance team—provide data input and act as finance and fiscal resources; and (f) senior clinical leadership—act as the major sponsor of the project, provides necessary guidance and direction.

A successful implementation of a home health competency program is essential to ensure organizational preparedness. To develop the competency program, the organization must start by determining the scope of the competency initiative and identifying applicable and specific regulatory requirements for both skilled and unskilled home care staff. The organization must identify the stakeholders who will drive the development of the competency program, such as the Quality Improvement team, leadership, and staff. The competency program must provide clarity on the type of components, whether they are generalized or specific to disciplines or positions. The implementation plan can be executed using in-house resources or outsourced. The competency program must include a formal document outlining the evaluation processes,

as well as the qualifications required for team members responsible for implementing and maintaining the program.

According to Williamson et al. (2022), the financial impact of turnover includes increased labor costs, lost revenue, recruitment and retention expenses, and increased practice variance, among other costs. Based on my health system's internal data and quality metrics, the average cost of replacing an RN position is approximately \$55,000. A vacant position can cost anywhere from \$8,500 within the first three months to up to \$15,000 after three months. This costs the health system approximately \$3.8 to \$5.9 million per year. Meanwhile, the cost of orientation for the newly hired nurse is estimated to be between \$ 20,000 and \$30,000 per nurse, versus a \$55,000 cost of turnover per nurse. Therefore, investing in comprehensive and structured orientation or training programs is a more cost-effective strategy for reducing employee turnover. Beyond its notable impact on retention, this approach also yields positive psychological effects (Williamson et. al., 2022).

The Action Plan

Understanding the major factors that threaten retention is the first step in addressing this global healthcare phenomenon. A good understanding of nurses' experiences related to work, especially as it pertains to nurse-patient ratios and other factors, is the most crucial and strategic step in addressing nurse burnout and turnover (Gray & Grove, 2020). The company's average annual retention rate of 65% poses a threat to safety and quality outcomes. Thus, understanding the major factors that threaten retention is the first step in addressing this global healthcare phenomenon. A good understanding of nurses' experiences related to their work is the first crucial and strategic

step in addressing nurse retention, which is the primary driving factor behind the nurse-to-patient ratio. The company is working to address the issue of nurse burnout, improve the nurse-to-patient ratio, and enhance staff engagement to enhance the overall staff experience. The problems of nurse burnout, staff dissatisfaction, and retention challenges are all associated with the nursing workforce shortage or poor nurse-to-patient ratio. These serious concerns pose a threat to patient safety, quality, and overall patient outcomes (Berman et al., 2022).

Purpose of the Project Plan

One of the primary purposes of this QI project is to determine whether a more thorough and structured onboarding process, incorporating mentoring, adequate training, and continuous reevaluation within the first 90 days, will enhance engagement, improve satisfaction, and overall retention within the first year in the home care setting. This will enable the organization to develop strategic interventions that will improve the retention of home care nurses and the intention to stay. (Pressley and Garside, 2022).

Establishing a strong onboarding program is an advantage, as well as having a well-structured mentorship. An organization's ability to effectively recruit and provide adequate training can be the driving force in retaining newly hired nurses (Kusmaul et al., 2020). This is partly because newly onboarded nurses drop off within their first 90 days. An organization's capacity to implement comprehensive onboarding and training programs significantly contributes to career advancement and development. This approach can play a critical role in retaining newly hired nurses, reducing burnout, enhancing staff retention, improving quality outcomes, and lowering operational costs (Hu et al., 2022).

Alignment With the Organization's Mission, Vision, and Values

Nurse retention poses significant challenges to individual organizations and the healthcare industry. It remains a serious global challenge despite the increase in newly licensed nurses. These severe concerns pose a threat to safety, quality, and overall care delivery across nations. Increased nurse turnover, a direct consequence of the nursing shortage, has a significant impact on patient safety, quality, and overall patient outcomes (Hu et al., 2022). This organization's mission is to enhance the quality of life within its communities. Hence, the project is geared towards implementing a formal onboarding program for new hires in the home care setting, which will improve quality, staff engagement, leading to higher staff and patient satisfaction, and improved retention.

Potential Risks and Benefits

To improve nurse retention, the organization must first assess its readiness to adopt and implement strategies that address the main factors negatively impacting job satisfaction and nurse retention. Factors such as work environment/culture, onboarding/training/development, leadership support/resources, employee engagement, employee appreciation, and open communication must be effectively addressed to effect and sustain the implemented change (Sipes, 2020).

Logic Model and Formative Assessment

Understanding employee needs and motivation: Conduct one-on-one sessions with the employees to gain a better insight into their perception of job satisfaction, career advancement aspirations, and other concerns they may have. Actively listening and creating a nurturing environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment. Soliciting feedback from them on areas they want to see improved will yield lasting dividends.

Improving the work environment: Create an all-inclusive, supportive, and positive work environment that encourages open communication. Offer a flexible schedule to promote work-life balance. Establish a formal and informal recognition and award plan to acknowledge the nurses who make impactful contributions to the organization's mission.

Career development and growth: Offer opportunities for skills enhancement and utilize individual development plans that specify career and promotion pathways for each person.

Onboarding and transitioning: Implement a well-structured onboarding process with mentorship to provide guidance and support to new hires as they integrate smoothly into the system.

Compensation and benefits: Provide competitive salary structures and comprehensive benefits packages, including health insurance and retirement plans that align with industry benchmarks.

Constant reevaluation of the retention plan: Reevaluate the retention plan regularly and make necessary improvements. The following return on investment (ROI)

projection encompasses the estimated annual benefits and the entire investment cost (Bonnabry & François, 2020). Projection includes:

- Net Profit/Benefit = \$125,000 (anticipated revenue from RN replacement +increased services)-\$55,000.00 (cost) = \$70, 000
- ROI (net profit/investment costs) x 100
- ROI = (\$70,000-\$55,000) x 100= 130%

Overall Goal of the Project

Nurse retention initiatives and programs have a substantial impact on my healthcare organization and the nursing profession. Effective programs are associated with enhanced quality and patient outcomes, reduced costs, expanded opportunities for professional development, and a positive organizational culture. Nurse turnover poses a significant threat to the financial health of any organization, as it incurs excessive costs associated with recruitment, onboarding, and potential productivity losses. Improved retention reduces organizational costs, mitigates financial risks, and enhances the organization's overall financial stability (Presley & Garside, 2023).

Effective leadership is recognized as a critical factor in hiring and retaining nursing staff. It is imperative for organizations to invest in their leaders to achieve optimal performance, thereby enhancing retention and minimizing the costs associated with nurse turnover. Leadership should be characterized by authentic support for staff needs, transparent communication, and an inclusive approach that empowers nurses through delegated responsibilities. Such practices foster a sense of belonging and are linked to increased retention within the organization (Kusmaul et al., 2020).

Summative Outcomes

Enhanced nurse retention ensures continuity of care and strengthens nurse-patient relationships, both of which are essential for fostering positive patient experiences and achieving high-quality outcomes. Retaining experienced nurses is associated with lower turnover rates, which, in turn, have been linked to improved patient outcomes, including decreased practice variance, reduced readmission rates, and lower mortality rates.

Enhanced employee retention contributes to a more stable and dependable workforce, leading to increased morale, greater engagement, and higher overall staff satisfaction. (Hsu et al., 2025).

Contribution to Social Change, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Improved nurse retention provides a significant contribution to social change, diversity, equity, and inclusion, first by fostering a diverse, stable, dedicated, and well-equipped nursing workforce (Pressley & Garside, 2023). Some of the key contributions include improved retention, bridging the health disparity gap, ensuring culturally competent care, addressing social determinants of health (SODH), and increasing access to healthcare, particularly in rural areas (Williams et al., 2018)

An effective retention program can help foster diversity and inclusion. Retained nurses may support policies that advance health equity and social justice, encourage diverse recruitment, support, and help maintain an inclusive work environment. It strengthens the nursing workforce and provides continuous learning opportunities, thereby reducing burnout and enhancing patient outcomes. Improved retention programs have a positive impact on the financial health of the organization, with evidence showing cost savings that lead to economic benefits. A significant part of the cost savings stems

from the reduced recruitment and training expenses. These cost savings could be reinvested in prioritized health initiatives, which will expand access to care, as they mitigate SODH (Haahr et al., 2020).

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