

Nurse Retention: Preceptors Can Make the Difference

- ❑ RNs in their 20s and 30s are much more willing to leave jobs that do not meet their personal and professional needs.
- ❑ Baby boomers approaching retirement age will affect the number of nurses in the workforce.
- ❑ Nurse retention has a significant effect on the bottom line of a hospital because of the costs of orienting and training new RNs.



- ❑ One of the leading causes of RN turnover is inadequate or incomplete orientation.
- ❑ The current RN workforce is more diverse than ever. Culture, gender, generational and religious differences can increase the potential for conflict within the workplace, resulting in job dissatisfaction.
- ❑ Nurses who do not feel invested in their organization's mission are much more likely to find employment elsewhere.
- ❑ Nurses are happier working in areas where a sense of community is present.
- ❑ RNs who are encouraged to participate in projects, teams or councils feel a more personal investment in their jobs.

What Makes Nurses 'Love It Or Leave It?'

The national average job turnover of all health care workers ranges between 18 percent and 20 percent, which is close to the overall national average for job turnover. However, because the health care industry will grow approximately 25 percent in this decade and the number of health care positions will grow exponentially, hospitals must improve their retention and recruitment of skilled registered nurses.

Another consideration is the financial implication of turnover. Hiring and orienting new RNs, depending on their experience, can cost as much as 200 percent of their annual salary.

So, what makes nurses leave an organization?

- lack of connection with co-workers
- inability to advance their careers
- job responsibilities that are not fulfilling or challenging
- feelings of being undervalued by their organizations.

New graduate RNs may have additional motives for changing positions.

- inadequate orientation
- asked to take on more clinical responsibility before they are ready
- insufficient socialization to their departments and co-workers

Surprisingly, salary is not one of the top reasons nurses leave their jobs.

Preceptors play a key role with retention during the orientation process. A successful orientation is not only paramount for patient safety and quality of care, but it also can provide the foundation for retention. In addition to establishing competency, orientation is the preceptee's introduction to the unit's culture and social milieu.

Preceptors have the opportunity to demonstrate the power of positive feedback by praising the performance of the preceptees in front of the other staff. In addition, demonstrating respect for the preceptees' knowledge and contributions will help them feel like a valued member of the health care team. The preceptor should take the responsibility of scheduling that final meeting between the three parties, which indicates and celebrates the end of orientation.

Preceptors do not have the ability to affect all job satisfiers for new RNs. However, preceptors do have a positive effect on many of the issues that are important to preceptees, which may have a positive effect on their retention.

Resources

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