
Minnesota Hospital Association Employee Retention Tool Kit



February 2012



Minnesota Hospital Association

Introduction

A strong and engaged workforce is the foundation of Minnesota's hospitals and health systems. The men and women that care for patients every day demonstrate the hard work, compassion and dedication that make hospitals an invaluable resource. Yet multiple external and internal factors in the health-care environment can undermine efforts to maintain a stable workforce, such as loss of revenue; an increasingly challenging health-care environment; an aging population; other health-care employers and industries vying for the same workers; and a decreasing supply of younger workers choosing to work in health care.

Hiring a qualified and talented workforce and implementing a program to retain these employees is a key component to successful workforce planning. It generally costs more to hire and train a new employee than it does to retain an existing employee. Efforts to retain employees in most cases will have a positive impact on the bottom line as well as on the service provided to patients.

Retention efforts are most effective when they are tailored to the local community. Much can be learned from surveys, exit interviews, and turnover data, but often that is not enough. Effective retention also involves many aspects of the work environment and the employee relationship. A comprehensive retention program will identify areas to focus on and it will include specific action items, timeframes and ways to measure results.

This Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) Employee Retention Tool Kit contains information in six content areas related to various aspects that impact retention:

- **Career growth and development – p. 2**
- **Culture and values – p. 5**
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- **Retention tool kit self-analysis worksheet — p. 17**

Within each content area you will find real-life examples from Minnesota hospitals. Last, there is a self-assessment worksheet that will help identify areas for improvement and will lay out a process to implement specific action items.

MHA staff extends a special thank you to the organizations that submitted examples of successful retention initiatives used herein. We also invite your comments, questions and suggestions that will continue to help make all Minnesota hospitals employers of choice in each community.

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Career Growth and Development

What is it?

Career growth is an employee's progression within an organization by their acceptance of new roles and responsibilities. Career development is how an individual manages their career within and between organizations and how organizations structure the progress of its staff. Employees are ultimately in charge of their own careers, however most employers offer a number of opportunities for career growth and personal development that benefit both the employee and employer.

Why is it important?

As an employer, you will meet future workforce demands and advance organizational goals by creating programs that help you retain a continued supply of qualified and talented personnel. In addition, the establishment of an organizational precedent to promote from within will result in increased employee job satisfaction, loyalty and retention.

What should it look like?

Career planning should be tailored to meet the employee's needs. A variety of programs are necessary to retain workers of all ages.

Examples include

Education and training — talented performers who are attracted to new and challenging opportunities will benefit from defined education and training goals. Management can identify and recommend high performers for advancement within the organization. Continuous learning programs for basic skills also help employees to grow and stay with an organization.

Leadership Development — core competency training for managers and self-assessments are two areas of leadership development where the skills and self-knowledge that is gained can be utilized across a variety of roles. Special projects or committee work is another area where an employee can demonstrate competencies, creativity or showcase innovations.

Knowledge transfer — as organizations are challenged with an aging workforce and the impending retirement of critical personnel, transferring knowledge to the next generation becomes an essential ingredient for sustainability. Deconstructing a job into a specific list of things a successor needs to know how to do is a simple step to help create a training plan.

Knowledge transfer is also a great retention opportunity. For example, Baby Boomer nurses are looking for ways to stay employed beyond the normal retirement age. Many require the ongoing income and health-care benefits and they also want to remain active contributors without the physical challenges of bedside nursing on full-time basis. One example of a role for qualified older nurses is that of mentor or clinical coach — mentoring nurses through their first year, or working with nurses or students who need help in certain areas. Retaining older nurses for the short term will maintain workforce stability, and mentoring programs will help to retain younger nurses for the long term.

Examples in Action

CENTRACARE Health System

**CentraCare Health System,
St. Cloud Hospital**

Organization size

6,477 employees

Program/Initiative Description

The medical oncology units budget money annually for staff members to attend outside educational sessions. The purpose is for staff to expand their knowledge of medical and oncology specialties, and to learn more about patients to continue to provide excellent care. Staff initially pay for the education, and they are reimbursed when they bring information back to the unit. Part of the requirement for reimbursement is that staff must teach others about what they have learned in a presentation or poster format.

Establishment of program/initiative: 2002 – 2003

Major objectives

To increase staff knowledge of the medical and oncology patient population and to promote these areas as nursing specialties.

Significant results

Several staff members have taken advantage of this opportunity over the past several years. They have appreciated the opportunity to learn and grow in their roles.

External partners

None.

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations

This has been a very positive experience for the medical/oncology units. Staff members enjoy the opportunity to learn and teach.

Estimated cost, to date

Varies from year-to-year. The medical/oncology units budget \$4,500 for staff to attend outside conferences. We also budget for unit leadership to attend national conferences and for staff to pursue national certifications in their specialty.

Contact information

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Fairview Health Services, Minneapolis

Organization size

22,000 employees

Program/Initiative Description:

Talent acquisition/workforce development serves employees in transition due to layoff, restructure or disability help with career planning and job search. Fairview helps staff develop the skills they will need to find their next position with resources and workshops covering:

- job search strategies;
- resource development;
- networking;
- applying online for jobs;
- job loss; and
- assessment testing.

Establishment of program/initiative

1995

Major objectives

1. Reduce the amount spent on unemployment insurance and replacement labor costs
2. Increase productivity and job satisfaction
3. Decrease industrial indemnity costs
4. Expand employee benefits and improve employee morale
5. Improve retention
6. Facilitate “the right people in the right job at the right time”
7. Assist in the realignment, including mid-career employees
8. Assist in the attainment of corporate objectives
9. Reduce negative exposure in community if employees are laid off

Significant results

Every year Fairview reduces industrial indemnity costs while at the same time providing goodwill to our displaced employees through this initiative.

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations

This is a win-win situation for Fairview.

Estimated cost, to date

The return on investment/ROI has far exceeded the cost.

Contact information

Laura Beeth, Talent Acquisition System Director: lbeeth1@fairview.org, (612) 672-2278

Culture and Values in Healthcare

What is it?

Culture is a sometimes mysterious word that defines the work environment. It is a shared set of values, beliefs and norms. For example, culture refers what the organization believes to be acceptable behavior and attitudes. Culture influences nearly every aspect of the workplace. An organization with an ethical culture will create a work environment that is positive, healthy and sensitive to the nuances of cultural and generational diversity.

Why is it important?

Identifying and working from a strong cultural foundation leads to an understanding of the organization's mission. With a clear sense of mission, a cultural vision for the future can be developed, with measurable strategies and objectives for improvement. Cultural competency will not only retain employees for the long-term, it will also help improve operational and clinical outcomes.

What should it look like?

Multiple factors influence culture, including organizational structure, policies and mission. Although a healthy workplace environment is one of the most important assets for retention, each hospital's culture is unique, and your organization may have multiple departments with distinct cultures. Some leaders believe that culture is impossible to change, however culture can be changed, shaped and unified. Promoting incremental changes will support an overall healthy culture and work environment with better results than a major culture change initiative. Leadership support is essential and managers from every unit need to help guide the changes.

Communicating a cultural vision and following up with actions are the essential first steps to transforming hospital culture. For example, the language used to describe your organization and employees can have a profoundly positive effect on culture. Through verbal and written communications you can emphasize that your organization is a great place to work, your employees are your greatest asset and they make a difference in people's lives every day.

Beyond language, ongoing processes that foster cooperation will support a healthy environment and culture where your employees will want to stay working. For example, establish focus groups, advisory boards, or other internal committees that include staff from all levels to recommend improvements for your organization.

Examples in Action



Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, St. Paul, MN

Organization size

1,200 employees

Program/initiative description

Wild on Wellness! (WOW!) Program

Establishment of program/initiative

2008

Major objectives

The WOW! program helps the organization create an environment that informs and supports employees in making choices to improve their health, to prevent future health issues and illnesses, and to boost employee moral. The program focuses on four core topics: preventive care, nutrition, physical activity, and peace. It creates challenges, quizzes, and other activities to help employees develop new habits and skills related to wellness.

Significant results

In an August 2011 survey, a majority of respondents agreed that the WOW! program helped them make better informed health and wellness choices, and it helped them take action to improve their health. Most also agreed or strongly agreed that the program contributes to making Gillette a great place to work.

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations

Part of the program's success is that it is employee-initiated-developed and-maintained by those from a number of departments across the organization (nursing, imaging, nutrition, therapies, human resources, therapeutic recreation, etc.). It is a grass-roots effort by employees who are passionate about wellness.

Estimated cost, to date

Employees get \$15/month back on their health insurance premium if they get at least 31 WOW! points by November 31 each year.

Contact information

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Cultural and Generational Diversity

What is it?

Our world and workforce are changing. Demographic trends predict an increase in cultural and generational diversity. Hospital leaders must be able to manage a multi-generational and diverse workforce and understand the benefits of including diversity as a core business strategy. Cultural and generational diversity is not the same as workplace culture. Workplace cultures are homogeneous in terms of core values, beliefs and norms, but they are not homogeneous in age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, spiritual practice and public assistance status.

Why is it important?

Helping your employees accept, respect, and value differences is a challenge for some organizations. However, a diverse workplace will help you more effectively serve a diverse patient population. The fresh perspectives, differing backgrounds and alternative skills can bring about enhanced productivity and innovation. Providing opportunities for people to interact informally, such as through lunch and learn sessions, can be beneficial, as can bringing together different generations in mentoring programs. For example, younger workers can help older workers learn new technologies, and older workers can share experiential knowledge with their younger counterparts.

What should it look like?

Successful diversity programs go beyond compliance with the law — they involve inclusion and ways to leverage diverse groups of workers of all ages. Diversity requires organizations to review their management practices and develop new and creative ways to manage people. Access to a variety of resources, policies and the ability to address areas of concern are essential competencies for the human resource and hospital leader.

Human Resources and Retention

What is it?

Recruiting and hiring a staff of qualified and motivated employees is vital for organizational success; retaining your employees for the long-term requires thoughtful planning as well. Your human resources department can play an important role in the assessment process and in the development of a strategic plan for retention.

Why is it important?

Most work-force analysts agree that the cost of turnover is higher than the costs of retaining your current staff members. Although a necessary and inevitable part of conducting business, turnover costs can represent a substantial portion of the annual budget. The hard or quantifiable costs of turnover are easy to calculate, such as the real dollars lost to overtime, advertising to fill the position and hiring contract employees when staff is unavailable. However, the soft or intangible costs of turnover also have an impact on the organization. Examples of these costs are decline in morale and productivity, and loss of organizational knowledge. Fortunately, some turnover can be prevented with effective retention-specific human resource practices.

What should it look like?

To effectively retain highly qualified and motivated employees, hospital executives should take steps to assess their current situation. What and where are your areas of strength? What can you learn from your exit interviews? And, what do your new employees tell you? Taking an inventory of your current skill base and identifying areas of vulnerability will provide direction for necessary change. Brainstorm ideas with stakeholders and make sure your retention strategies involve all generations.

MHA Resource

The MHA Workforce Tool allows participating members to access data to assist them in planning for workforce needs through the use of statewide benchmarking and internal projections. The MHA Workforce Tool collects data on 38 job types and about 14 demographic attributes. Data is collected once a year from member hospitals, and MHA also creates a statewide summary that is used to educate others about workforce trends. For more information about the MHA Workforce Tool, please visit the MHA web site, or contact MHA workforce staff listed in the introduction.

New Employee On-boarding

What is it?

On-boarding is the term used for a process that goes above and beyond a traditional new hire orientation program. On-boarding involves providing a new hire with information and training over a longer period of time, with measurable objectives and outcomes that allow for the new hire to become productive as soon as possible. The process includes introductions, training, integration and coaching new hires to the brand, culture and methods of the organization. A new hire can be defined as someone new to the organization or a current employee in a new position.

Why is it important?

All of your successful recruitment practices will yield little if new recruits leave the organization within a few months. Recruitment and retention are closely linked for this reason. Effective on-boarding techniques will help improve your retention rate.

What should it look like?

On-boarding needs to be intentional and customized to the individual and the position. However, the fundamental needs of new hires do not change. They need to know what is expected of them, what they have to work with and how they will be evaluated and rewarded.

New hires typically look for management that is interested in their wellbeing, the appropriate amount of decision-making authority needed to do their job and that the opportunity to develop new skills.

Successful on-boarding programs include components that help new hires understand their job roles and expectations. These expectations are communicated early and often. Many on-boarding programs also include assigning the new hire with a coach for the first few months and an HR contact to periodically discuss progress and address concerns. Constructive feedback should be encouraged from the new hire, the team and the manager. Management practices and evaluation processes may need to be updated to incorporate an on-boarding process.

Examples in Action



St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, Wabasha, MN

Organization size

350 employees; 25-bed hospital, 100 beds long-term care, 49 assisted-living apartments

Program/Initiative description

New Hire Mentorship Program. The organization partners new hires with a mentor that had to apply and interview for the position. The mentor works on the normal orientation aspects of a new hire.

They also provide social support and are responsible for informing the scheduler when the new hire is ready to “hit the floor.”

Major objectives

Reduction of turnover; improvement in employee morale and less of the “old eating the young.”

Significant results

Industry average turnover for a long term care certified nursing assistant is approximately 70 percent. St. Elizabeth's turnover average was 60 percent; since the implementation of this program, turnover is averaging 20 percent.

External partners

Educational materials from various partners for our new hire mentorship-training program.

Estimated cost, to date

\$.50/hour adjustment for mentors. The costs of the program are greatly overshadowed by the decrease in turnover.

Contact information

Jim Root, VP, Human Resources: Jim.root@ministryhealth.org, (651)565-5526



Fairview Health Services, Minneapolis

Organization size

22,000 employees

Program/Initiative Description

The Talent Acquisition/Workforce Development program supports the education and training goals of employees, employee families and students in the communities we serve. As part of improving the health of the communities we serve, we support the education of our future health-care providers by offering a variety of financial resources (sponsorships, scholarships and training programs) and clinical rotations to help make education goals a reality.

Establishment of Program/Initiative

1997

Major Objectives

Proactively plan for future needs and minimize potential shortages in critical areas (e.g. nurses, physical therapists, lab, imaging, providers).

Significant results

Critical need areas are more easily filled because recipients are contracted to work at Fairview as part of our commitment.

External partners

University of Minnesota, St. Catherine University, Augsburg College, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and other private colleges in Minnesota.

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations

Fairview proactively plans to fill potential openings before they become shortages.

Estimated cost, to date

The return on investment/ROI has far exceeded the cost.

Contact information

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Workplace Design

What is it?

Workplace design is the planning of the workplace environment, structures and equipment to reduce or eliminate the potential for injury and illness.

Why is it important?

Quality workplace design improves organizational efficiency and productivity – improving the quality of care while impacting the bottom line through the reduction of work-related accidents. It can also one of your best assets for recruitment and retention — an organization that emphasizes employee health and safety will attract and retain staff through the design and management of a healthy and healing environment.

What should it look like?

Workplace design incorporates ergonomics — equipment, technologies or other strategies — that make hospitals a better place to work. Successful preventative safety programs incorporate training in safe lifting and other related principles; policies and procedures geared toward injury prevention and ergonomically engineered equipment and technology.

MHA Resource

This spring MHA will release a road map/tool kit for safe patient handling that will assist members in further implementing state law that requires all health-care facilities to establish a policy to minimize manual lifting of patients by nurses and other direct care workers. The road map will be available on the MHA web site.

Examples in Action



Sanford Bemidji Medical Center, Bemidji

Organization size

950 employees

Program/initiative description

The Safe Patient Handling initiative was designed to prevent employee injuries caused by lifting and transporting patients. We installed ceiling lifts in most of our patient rooms and purchased various safe patient handling devices to move patients safely. A “low lift” policy was implemented by providing training to our direct patient care staff. Sanford Bemidji Medical Center realized a significant reduction in injury rates (DART and TCIR) as well as our workers’ compensation costs. While Safe Patient Handling was not implemented as a retention program, work days lost to injury were reduced significantly from almost 600 work days in 2003 to only 31 days for 2008 as of October 31. Employee morale improved along with the opportunity for employees to enjoy longer careers because of reduced physical demands.

Establishment of Program/Initiative

2002

Major objectives

Reduce the number of employee reportable injuries and lower workers’ compensation costs. In 2002, we had 50 back injuries with 32 of them in our medical/surgical unit. Such injuries needed to be prevented.

Significant results

A decrease in total on-the-job injuries, decrease in work days lost to injury and a decrease in workers’ compensation costs. Employees appreciate that Sanford Bemidji Medical Center cares about workplace safety and demonstrates that commitment.

continued on next page

	Workers Compensation Costs	Days away from work due to illness	Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR)	Days away from work (DART rate)
2001 (Base)	\$878/fte			
2002	\$675/fte			
2003	\$406/fte	592		
2004	\$479/fte	255		
2005	\$274/fte	166		
2006	\$286/fte	119	9.56	5.8
2007	\$268/fte	78	8.7	2.8
2008	\$530/fte*	73	6.5	2.6
2009	\$182/fte	117	4.8	2.9
2010	\$48/fte	49	3.2	.6
2011	\$61/fte est.	36 (as of 9/30/11)	5.2	2.2

*Serious car accident

External partners:

Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Bemidji HealthCare Accessories

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations:

Listen to your employees, even when they tell you what you don't want to hear. What works in one organization may not work in yours. Survey your employees about physically demanding tasks that may increase stress or cause pain. Train employees on proper use of equipment. Assign peer leaders to cheerlead, train and hold staff accountable. Safety is the number-one priority.

Contact information

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Sharon Teich, SPHR, Director of Human Resources: sharon.teich@sanfordhealth.org, (218) 333-5582

Organization size

Approximately 7,000 employees, including medical staff

Program/initiative description

Safe workplace promotion including, but not limited to, safe patient handling, aggressive patient behavior management, general workplace safety, flu program development/management, and workers compensation case management/injury prevention. Multi-faceted and all-encompassing employee safety focus that is designed to meet regulatory and compliance expectations as well as engage employees in decisions that will enhance safety and satisfaction of staff as well as patients/families. Frequent newsletter safety articles, bulletin board displays, online computer based training modules, and live training sessions are all tools employed to engage staff in thinking and applying safety to their activities at work and at home. Construction of the East Tower addition is nearly completed and has included safety tours as well as input on design, device, and furniture selection. Collaboration and communication are essential to assure employee participation in developing and maintaining a safe workplace and a remarkable patient experience.

Establishment of program/ initiative

2008

Major objectives

Improve employee safety, satisfaction and retention, which are significant contributing factors to assure safe and satisfied patients.

Significant results

Continued focus on reducing needle sticks, back injuries and other safe patient handling injuries continues to result in reduced injury severity. The organization's safety culture is showing increasing awareness of the importance of employee safety with entire departments adopting specific safety activities that reduce risk of injury.

External partners

State Fund Mutual Insurance Company, Mahowald Insurance Agency, construction contractors and vendors who are helping develop better devices for safe patient care.

Lessons learned / advice to other organizations

Involve staff at all levels. Listen to their ideas and experiences, as listening and then acting upon what you have learned creates an environment of trust. Selecting safety equipment with input from staff brings greater employee participation in use of those devices and assures reduction in injuries at work.

Estimated cost to date

Costs for equipment including purchase of ceiling lift tracks and devices for the East Tower expansion as well as training are significant budget items. Payback has potential to be priceless.

Contact Information

Karen Witzman, EHS Director: WitzmanK@centracare.com, (320) 255-2534

Organization size

6,477 employees

Program/initiative description

R.N. self-scheduling on the Medical Unit 2/MCPU started at the request of nurses to increase R.N. retention and allow greater scheduling flexibility. Unit leadership investigated the basics of the process and held informational meetings. Unit staff decided to try the process on a trial basis, setting a deadline and determining guidelines, expectations and providing education. A task force was formed prior to the go-live date, and included 12 R.N. self-scheduling champions to help get the project up and running. The task force currently conducts ongoing reviews, communicates the findings, and assists with problem-solving.

Establishment of program/initiative

2008

Major objectives

To increase R.N. satisfaction with scheduling and promote retention.

Significant results

Overall, R.N.s like the new process. Participation rates are good, which is a must for self-scheduling to work. We are in our third schedule and continue to work on the problems as they arise.

External partners

The medical unit 2/MPCU mimicked the model used by the telemetry unit. In addition, the medical oncology LPNs have been self-scheduling for several years.

Lessons learned/advice to other organizations

Make sure that there are very clear guidelines and expectations for staff. You do not want this to turn out to be “selfish scheduling.” Staff must understand that if the schedule is not balanced, the scheduler will balance the schedule and will not call staff if changes need to be made. The ultimate goal of self-scheduling is that staff should balance the schedule themselves.

Estimated cost, to date

Minimal cost. There was some additional meeting time for the planning phases and the task force.

Contact information

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Retention Tool Kit Self-Analysis Worksheet

Retention category:

Strengths (current state):

Opportunities for improvement (desired state)	Importance (H,M,L)	Deadline	Who is responsible	Anticipated costs	Return on Investment (R.O.I.)