

Who You Gonna Call? WellStaffed!

Authors

Jamie Chiveral MSN, RN, NE-BC, CEN and Jessica Ellis MSN, RN, NPD-BC

Objective of program

Increasing nurse vacancy is a problem being faced by healthcare facilities across our nation. Staffing needs were traditionally supplemented by hospital float pools and intermittent use of external agency staff. As patient census and acuity rose exponentially during the pandemic, internal float pool resources were no longer adequate, requiring a dramatic increase in reliance on expensive external agency nurses. External agency nurses fill long-term staffing needs with contracts typically spanning 13 weeks. External agency nurses are not employed by the hospital they are assigned to, often having minimal commitment to its core values and culture, compared to employed staff.

Planning/research methods

An internal agency was created to combine the best of both worlds – the flexibility of agency workforce with the dedication and commitment of an employee. The purpose of the internal staffing agency was to fill long-term needs spanning 2-12 weeks at hospitals across the system. In addition, this program would retain registered nurses to the health system who were considering travel position for professional development. A team of healthcare leaders representing human resources, nursing, regulatory, finance, and legal gathered to discuss the logistics of setting up an internal agency. Focusing first on registered nurses and nursing assistants, the taskforce determined employment requirements, compensation, scheduling, and orientation needs.

Implementation methods

The health system approved 20 unbudgeted FTEs to start the internal agency program. Nurse managers were engaged in planning sessions to understand the staffing needs across a diverse health system. Employees who were at risk for leaving the organization for travel nursing positions were identified by nurse leaders. These employees were reached out to by the team to have stay interviews. In addition, the team also received information regarding locally located travelers who would make valuable employees. These travelers were engaged by the team to discuss the program.

Results

Program has grown to have 57.2 RN FTEs and 15.9 NA FTEs for a total of 110 employees. Calendar year 2022 the program has completed 439 assignments. 361 RN assignments completed on an average of 12 weeks. Average hourly rate of internal agency RN is 62.14/hr in comparison to average RN traveler rate of 120/hr. Using the average hourly rate of 62.14 X 36 hours/week X 52 weeks/year= 111,326.08 plus benefits that cost 29,083.32 for a total of 146,160.40. External agency cost per year is 224,640. Cost avoidance of 78,479.60 per RN employee yearly. WellStaffed currently employees over 80 RNs which saved the health system over 6.2 million in external travel expenses.

In addition, WellStaffed helped retain 35 internal employees to the health system. Per “2022 NSI National Health Care Retention and Staffing Report”, low range cost of RN turn is \$46,100 per RN. Health System avoided 1.6 million in turnover. 3 RNs left program and the health system equaling a loss of 138,300. 13 RNs took positions within the health care organization filling open unit vacancies with no additional orientation expenses to the organization.

References:

“2022 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report.” 2022 NSI National Health Care Retention and RN Staffing Report, NSI Nursing Solutions, Inc, Mar. 2022,
https://www.nsinursingsolutions.com/Documents/Library/NSI_National_Health_Care_Retention_Report.pdf.

Contact

Jamie Chiveral, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CEN, System WellStaffed, WellSpan Health