

Converting Workforce Challenges to Market Leadership Through Innovation

Case Study: Citrus Valley Health Partners

In a world of health reform and changing reimbursement, it is critical to build a highly-skilled workforce committed and qualified to improve the patient experience. Imagine a health care workforce strategy that allows employers to lead the way in engaging and capturing top talent in rapidly changing markets. This strategy would allow an employer to:

- Recruit, train and retain a large pool of qualified, best-fit health professionals who are driven to contribute to the success of the organization
- Improve the patient experience by developing health care professionals who meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the communities served
- Improve the staff experience by providing additional support for non-licensed tasks
- Ensure that top candidates who are passionate about careers in health care receive the training, support and guidance necessary to succeed
- Develop and strengthen partnerships with local academic institutions, including schools for all ages, colleges, universities and professional degree programs
- Provide all professional staff, present and future, with unrivaled lifelong learning and professional development services



This vision became a reality for Citrus Valley Health Partners (CVHP), a three hospital system in the greater Los Angeles Area. This is the story of how CVHP partnered with COPE Health Solutions (COPE) to develop a comprehensive workforce development pipeline.

Background

In 2000, CVHP faced a critical shortage of registered nurses (RNs). CVHP regularly had over 100 vacant nursing positions and a 32% annual turnover rate for new graduate nurses. Struggling to find “qualified, best-fit” candidates to fill its high volume RN vacancies, they relied on high registry and agency use. This challenge resulted from several factors commonly shared by California and U.S. hospitals, including: an aging RN population, lack of capacity at local colleges to train a sufficient number of RNs each year, and an unsupportive working environment for the new graduate. CVHP, like all hospitals at that time, utilized commonplace methods to recruit RNs, including very competitive salaries and bonus incentives. These were short-term solutions, and did not significantly contribute to their goal of recruiting and retaining, on a sustainable basis, a strong RN workforce.

CVHP’s passion was for an innovative and cost-effective long-term workforce strategy to recruit and train from within its local community to meet current and projected workforce needs. To actualize this vision, CVHP collaborated with COPE to build community-based workforce pipelines and sustainable partnerships between health care employers and academic institutions.

The Solution

Together, CVHP and COPE Health Solutions implemented a Health Workforce Diversity Pipeline to address workforce challenges. Originating with “hands on” educational programs in 2001, known as the COPE Health Scholars programs, the Pipeline today consists of four core components: Health Scholar, Student Nurse Scholar, Mentorship & Professional Development and Licensed Nurse Scholar.



COPE Health Scholar

Pairing workforce needs with motivated college/university level students, graduates and career transition individuals interested in health care careers from the local community the Health Scholar program was launched. This program formed the foundation of CVHP's Health Workforce Diversity Pipeline and provided over 3,400 participants with an unrivaled hands on clinical experience. Currently, over 500 active participants rotate among different departments across the three hospital campuses.

This programmatic strategy increased the diversity of the potential labor pool through recruiting and training a diverse group of culturally and linguistically competent students. Today, 59% of active participants are bilingual. Health Scholars provided significant patient care support by helping with non-licensed/certified tasks; increasing response time to patient needs and enhancing the patient experience. Success has been measured in a number of ways - but perhaps none more important than having over 100 Health Scholars ultimately choosing CVHP as their place of employment.

Student Nurse Scholar Program

Targeting efforts to develop a pool of qualified, best-fit RNs to fill the high volume of RN vacancies, in 2003, CVHP expanded its Pipeline by providing training and scholarship opportunities to local nursing students. By collaborating with the local nursing program at Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) the Student Nurse Scholar program was born, providing comprehensive support, guidance, mentorship, and potential employment to nursing students. The Student Nurse Scholar program targeted students who either had participated in the Health Scholars program or were top nursing students at Mt. SAC, to fill RN vacancies. Those students selected into the program received guidance and support as they completed their education and licensure, including financial support, networking opportunities, mentorship and an externship. Since 2004, the Student Nurse Scholar program has assisted and supported 94 nursing students with obtaining their RN licensure. Of that, 88 (94%) were offered and accepted full-time employment with CVHP. RNs who were hired through this program committed to working for CVHP for two years, thus contributing to a significant decrease in new graduate RN turnover and the overall RN vacancy rate.

Mentorship & Professional Development Program

With success in hand, CVHP recognized the need to bridge the gap between academic training and professional practice. The Mentoring & Professional Development (MAP) program was created to meet this need. MAP is an extensive 12-week new graduate and new hire residency training that provides the support and orientation needed to transition into and succeed in their new role. Additionally, MAP provides preceptor training to the experienced staff RN. This component enabled culture and capability by providing staff nurses with knowledge and tools necessary to orient the new graduates. MAP has been helpful not only to train new graduate nurses, but also internationally-trained and re-entry nurses hired by CVHP. Cultural competency is a key topic incorporated in both the preceptor and residency training to ensure that all new grad/new-hire nurses are equipped with the skills and competency to provide quality care to the hospital's patient population.

The results of these efforts have been nothing short of extraordinary. CVHP realized a decrease in new graduate RN turnover from 32% (before implementing these Pipeline components) to 5% post implementation. Both CVHP and COPE are extremely proud that MAP received the Excellence Award at the Showcase of Excellence Luncheon during the Chapter Leader Academy of Sigma Theta Tau, International, Inc., the Honor of Society of Nursing in 2006.

Licensed Nurse Scholar Program

In 2010, with the downturn in the economy and an abundance of new graduate RNs unable to find employment, CVHP creatively leveraged existing Pipeline strategies to develop the Licensed Nurse Scholar program. This program cultivated a reserve of future nurse candidates best-fit to CVHP's culture of patient care to be readily drawn

Results from Program Implementation



over 100 Health Scholars choose CVHP as place of employment

94%

of nursing students accepted full-time employment with CVHP

27%

Reduction in new RN graduate turnover



Recipient of Excellence Award at Showcase of Excellence Luncheon

upon to fill vacancies. The Licensed Nurse Scholar program allows new graduate RNs to keep current in the patient care setting while gaining exposure to health care employers. Through a structured 24 week program, new graduate RNs attend weekly shadowing sessions with experienced RNs in clinical areas while also attending Professional Skills Development Workshops. The combination of these experiences prepares them for employment and familiarizes them with the culture and values of the organization. Since CVHP implemented the program, in September 2010, 21 new graduate RNs have participated in the program and of those 11 have been hired by CVHP as of April 2011.

Outcomes

The Health Workforce Diversity Pipeline helped CVHP to reduce new graduate RN turnover, reduce the RN vacancy rate and proactively address rapid changes in the workforce market. This allowed CVHP to build the highly-skilled workforce needed to improve the patient experience and ensure the success of the organization. As a market leader, CVHP is undertaking a number of initiatives to prepare and respond to the immediate needs of health reform. However, by continuing to address and develop a strong workforce pipeline, CVHP will be well positioned to thrive during the impending workforce shortage. While the market has temporarily seen a reprieve in workforce shortages and openings, the demographics of the current workforce will ultimately drive a critical and unparalleled demand for qualified candidates who reflect the culture of their organization and community.

COPE Health Solutions is a national leader in helping health care organizations succeed amid complexity and uncertainty

For more information, please contact
info@copehealthsolutions.com or 213-259-0245.