

## SE 7

Provide a narrative description of the organization's action plan for registered nurse's progress toward obtaining a baccalaureate degree or higher in nursing.

Narrative description must include:

- State the targeted goal
- How the target goal was established
- What strategies were utilized to achieve or maintain the target ( $\geq 80\%$ )
- How the nurses are supported to achieve or maintain a baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing.

### **Organization's Action Plan for Baccalaureate or Higher Degrees in Nursing** **Establishing a Target for RNs Obtaining a Baccalaureate or Higher Degree in Nursing**

Harriet Stephenson, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, Director of Nursing Education, reviews with, Cindy Boily, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Sr. Vice President, and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), quarterly BSN reports, workforce projections, and strategies to assist in establishing the BSN target. In December 2021, the baseline was 75.55% of registered nurses at WakeMed with a baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing. A goal of 1% increase over two years to be reached by December 2023 was set by Stephenson and Boily.

At that time, extenuating circumstances related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were identified as impacting progress and the annual target was re-established as a two-year goal. Extenuating circumstances were discussed often between Stephenson and Boily. Stephenson shared feedback received from nurse managers regarding challenges staff were having that impacted their progress. These circumstances and impact were discussed with the Nurse Executive Council who approved the re-established goal. Many nursing programs temporarily closed in 2020 and 2021, which impacted staff members currently enrolled in or soon to begin a BSN program. The organization has experienced unusually high turnover in nursing, which has stretched current staff and has impacted their ability to return to school given their work schedules. In addition, the organization continued with strict visitor restrictions from October 2020-September 2021 and October 2021-September 2022, which prevented it from holding education fairs or inviting academic partners on campus.

### **Strategies Used to Achieve Target**

WakeMed has all new hires with an associate degree or diploma in nursing sign an employment agreement states they must obtain a BSN or higher degree within five years of their employment date. On August 1, 2023, the completion date in the agreement was increased from five to seven years. Human Resources sent a letter to all employees detailing the change and their new completion date.

All academic information is tracked in WakeMed's human resources information services (HRIS) system, Infor Global Human Resources (Infor GHR); WakeMed staff referred to this as "the HUB." Recruiters enter academic information in the HUB upon

each employee hire, after which a member of the management team confirms and updates degrees for each of their direct reports. Stephenson works with Janet Murdoch, Manager of HRIS/Metrics, HR Operations, to send monthly academic reports from the HUB listing all nurses with a BSN or higher degree. These reports provide a way for nursing leadership to review the accuracy for staff members in their departments and update if needed.

A new streamlined monthly reporting process was implemented in March 2023, and an additional tab was added to the current monthly report on August 1, 2023 to identify all nursing staff members who have signed an employment agreement, along with their completion dates. This report helps leaders support their nurses and ensure they are aware of required completion dates.

Quarterly reports are pulled from the HUB identifying the percentage of staff members with a baccalaureate or higher degree. This quarterly report, which is used to monitor progress toward goal achievement, is shared with nursing leadership. Nursing leadership discusses professional development progress, including academic growth, during annual evaluations and six-month touch-base meetings, and as clinical nurses raise questions.

Nursing leadership also recognizes academic achievements through the hospital newsletter and department celebrations. In addition, nursing leaders discuss with clinical nurses the Nursing Professional Development Program (NPDP) to determine their phase in program, review academic growth needed to determine each nurse's appropriate level in the program, and identify growth opportunities.

### **Organizational Support to Achieve Target**

WakeMed has long provided tuition reimbursement for eligible employees. The amount for undergraduate and graduate study changed on May 1, 2022, with \$3,500 available for undergraduate study and \$5,000 for graduate study per fiscal year for full-time employees, and part-time employees eligible for up to \$1,750 and \$2,500.

In addition, the WakeMed Foundation, the philanthropic partner of WakeMed, provides scholarships and programs to further WakeMed's mission. The Helton Scholar program provides funding for individuals seeking to complete a higher education degree, up to \$10,000 per year.

WakeMed's Workforce Development Department and Nursing Education Department have partnered to provide an annual Education Fair to all WakeMed employees. These were restarted in 2023 once visitation restrictions were removed. The Education Fair features representatives from local, state, and distance learning programs. These departments also collaborate with learning programs to provide education partnerships to support tuition savings for employees. WakeMed currently has seven education partnerships for employees, and these are listed on the WakeMed intranet to provide awareness.