



# How professional development retains more nurses



## Introduction

The rate of nurse turnover, which is costly to healthcare organizations, continues to grow nationwide. According to the 2016 National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report, published by NSI Nursing Solutions, Inc., the turnover rate for bedside RNs increased to 17.2 percent in 2015—up from 16.4 percent in 2014.

With the average cost of turnover for a bedside RN ranging from \$37,700 to \$58,400 annually per nurse, a hospital can lose between \$5.2 million and \$8.1 million each year. Based on these calculations, every percentage reduction in RN turnover could save a hospital an additional \$373,200.

This white paper examines what chief nursing officers and nurse leaders can do to mitigate this trend by ramping up professional development programs for nurses. These programs are appreciated by nurses at all levels, and make them less likely to resign, by building skills and confidence earlier in their careers and allowing veteran nurses to become more valuable to their organizations. Employer-provided development initiatives can positively impact job satisfaction, loyalty, tenure, and retention among nurses. They can also significantly lower organizational recruitment costs over the long term.



## Success starts with better orientation

New nursing graduates face job anxiety and challenges that can overwhelm them, personally and professionally, and lead to frustration and, often, resignation. In fact, the highest rates of nurse turnover occur in the first year of employment. To alleviate these issues and enhance nurses' ability to meet expectations for applying their knowledge, skills, competencies, and judgment in practice, organizations should offer effective and comprehensive onboarding and orientation programs.

The programs should not only accommodate each individual's learning needs (which can be complex), but also align with the organization's strategic goals, culture, and values. Needs assessments, preceptor guidance, and evaluation processes are essential to ensure progress in the transition into practice—all with the goal of achieving optimal patient outcomes.



## Ongoing learning, education, and development

Professional development activities support the growth and maintenance of continuing competence, enhance nurses' professional practice, and help nurses reach their career goals. Hospitals and healthcare systems that offer in-house developmental programs, tuition reimbursement for continuing education, and support for membership in nursing organizations create loyal, collaborative, and appreciative nurses who don't want to work anywhere else.

## Mentorship—another powerful developmental tool

Good professional development opportunities are crucial for advancing nursing skills and careers. However, having the right mentoring can be equally important, not only at the beginning but also through the entirety of a nurse's career. Strong mentors can provide information, advice, support, and ideas that influence a nurse's professional development and help empower emerging nurse leaders within the organization.

## In summary

Providing professional development opportunities to nurses at all levels instills pride, builds confidence, and creates a strong sense of belonging within the organization. Giving nurses opportunities to continually advance their knowledge and skills helps ensure optimal patient care and outcomes. Moreover, nurses make excellent brand ambassadors in the community. Their experiences of positive professional growth speak volumes to recruitment candidates.

Offering robust professional development options is one of the best responses to the problem of nursing turnover. It will support nurses' goals for lifelong learning and help improve your organization's capabilities.

**Professional development is one of the six standards of the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Pathway to Excellence Program®.**

To learn more, visit [nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway](https://nursingworld.org/organizational-programs/pathway)