

# CHAPTER 3 - DEVELOPING, SUSTAINING, AND RETAINING NURSES IN THEIR CAREERS

## Strategy 6

### Strengthen transition to practice and early career development for nursing students and new graduates across all care delivery settings

**Strategy 6.1** Academic programs in nursing, North Carolina Area Health Education Centers, and employers of nurses should collaborate to expand the availability of new graduate nurse residency programs, including in more underserved and community-based settings, such as rural communities and community-based nursing practice.

#### Desired Result

New nurses will feel confident and prepared to serve patients and retention rates within the first two years of practice and beyond will improve.

#### Why does the task force recommend this strategy?

Retention of new nurses and patient safety are key reasons that transition-to-practice initiatives, such as residency programs, are necessary. The cost of nurse turnover can be high for employers at up to \$88,000 per nurse.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it is more common for such programs to be provided in hospital settings. Offering residency programs could encourage new nurses to find employment in community-based settings and other less common settings for new nurses, such as those in rural areas.

#### Context

Transition-to-practice nurse residency programs are designed to support new nurses as they transition from nursing school to clinical practice. They can help new nurses gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to deliver safe, high-quality patient care. Programs typically include classroom instruction, clinical rotations, and mentorship. Residency programs help improve nurse retention and readiness for practice while increasing job satisfaction compared to a standard orientation program. More than half of nurses and 39% of physicians who responded to a survey about effective methods to reduce burnout and improve well-being in the hospital setting said that “more resources to support new-to-practice clinicians” would be effective.<sup>4</sup>

#### RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSITION TO PRACTICE PROGRAMS

A study by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing provides evidence for the importance of structured programs for transition to practice. The study was conducted in two phases, first “in hospitals with RNs, while Phase II was conducted in public health, home health, and nursing home settings with RNs and LPNs”.<sup>5</sup> Outcomes from the first phase showed that programs were most successful at reducing errors and work stress and improving competence, use of safety practices, job satisfaction, and retention if they involved:

- “A formalized program that is integrated into the institution, with support from higher administration;
- A preceptorship, and the preceptor should be educated for the role;
- The program is 9-12 months in length;
- Content includes patient safety, clinical reasoning, communication and teamwork, patient-centered care, evidence-based practice, quality improvement, informatics;
- Time for new graduates to learn and apply the content and to obtain feedback and share their reflections;
- Customization so the new graduates learn specialty content in the areas where they are working.”<sup>5</sup>

Results from Phase II of the study are not yet available.

#### EXAMPLES FROM NORTH CAROLINA AND BEYOND

- **NC Hospice & Home Care Pilot** – The Hospice & Home Care Foundation of North Carolina developed, piloted, and is now rolling out a program statewide to help nursing programs and home care and hospice employers prepare students and onboard new graduates to serve in this setting. “Part of the pilot included creating a successful curriculum and an onboarding model for any home health and hospice employer to help a new employee, whether the employee was a brand new nurse or a nurse new to the specific specialty.”<sup>6</sup>
- **NC Credentialed Public Health Nurse Program** – The first of its kind in the nation, this award-winning credential program ensures public health nurses have access to the specialty’s current scope and standards of practice information, supports continuing competency, and is required by 10A NCAC 46 .0301 to be completed within one year of employment with a health department.<sup>7</sup>
- **Cleveland Clinic Professional Career Pathway** – “Nurses in their first year of employment at Cleveland Clinic have many professional development opportunities that help them acclimate to their department and participate in available programs and initiatives.”<sup>8</sup> After the first year, nurses select one of four professional tracks: Leadership, Clinical Expert, Advanced Practice, and Beyond Bedside Care. Tracks feature developmental courses, experiential learning, and supporting activities.

#### KEY RESOURCE NEEDS



An environmental scan of existing programs would serve as guidance for employers seeking to develop these programs. Possible entities that could conduct an environmental scan include NC AHEC, nursing trade associations, employer trade associations, and the NC Center on the Workforce for Health.



Financial support is needed for an organization to conduct an environmental scan of existing programs.