

HealthTrust Workforce Solutions' StaRN Program Answers Critical Nursing Need

The StaRN Nurse Education Program from HealthTrust Workforce Solutions, an affiliate of HealthTrust, has helped close the staffing and RN skills gap for many hospitals by increasing the pool of qualified candidates. The program, which is an acronym for Specialty Training Apprenticeship for Registered Nurses, brings in newly licensed nurses and provides them with advanced training on-site and from home using AACN standards, as well as state of the art scenario simulations and preceptorship completed at the hiring facility.

“We have an interesting phenomena going on right now in nursing,” said Tony Pentangelo, executive vice president of managed services for HealthTrust Workforce Solutions business unit. “It’s very competitive for critical care nurses in particular.”

In several markets, he added, a significant number of new nursing graduates were licensed and had passed their boards. However, a shortage of positions for beginning nurses left many of these graduates unemployed or under-employed. “We had licensed nurses working as waitresses,” Pentangelo said.

On the flip side, he noted, hospitals were competing against each other for specialty care nurses or bringing in contract nurses to try to meet demand. “The hospitals won’t take newly licensed nurses for critical care,” Pentangelo said, adding that almost never happens. “The intensity and the acuity of the patients are just too high. Typically, they want at least two years of experience.”

The need at one end and surplus on the other had created a frustrating ‘catch 22’ for both area hospitals and new nurses. “We think this helps bridge that gap a little bit,” Pentangelo said of StaRN.

The intensive, 13-week program for nursing graduates combines classroom instruction, a robust simulation experience and hands-on clinical training done in conjunction with a regional academic partner. Upon completion, the nursing graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skill set typically found in more experienced staff nurses.

The first half of the program is spent in the classroom and simulation labs where Pentangelo said the nurses get hands-on experience in a very controlled environment. The last half of the program is spent in a clinical preceptorship. “It really helps them understand how to apply the knowledge in a patient scenario,” Pentangelo noted.

StaRN Program 101

- ✓ Launched in June 2014
- ✓ 2,275 learners in 2016
- ✓ 5,000+ learners scheduled for 2017
- ✓ Specialties include Critical Care, Telemetry, Med/Surg, ER/OR, and Behavioral Health

Prospective candidates interview with the hospitals so they are pre-identified for the units in need. The hospitals then pay a placement fee that covers the cost of the StaRN program. In exchange, the participating nurses make a two-year commitment to work at the sponsor hospital. Training during the course can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the sponsor hospital.

While there is an out-of-pocket cost to the hospitals, Pentangelo said it doesn't compare to the expense of bringing in contract nurses year-round, particularly if a hospital is paying signing bonuses, housing allowances, and travel stipends. "We estimate that if a facility can replace a contract labor FTE (full-time equivalent), the savings is upward of \$100,000 per (StaRN) nurse."

Another benefit is the young nurses typically already have ties to the community unlike travel nurses that have no real reason to stay beyond their contract period. "These local nurses want to stay in the town. They're committed to the town. They know the hospital," Pentangelo stressed. Hiring locally also enhances the hospital's hometown relations by reinvesting in the community.

"When hospitals can't find specialty-trained nurses, they are forced to use costly alternative measures such as hiring temporary contract labor, which does not address the core problem: the shortage of experienced, specialty-trained nurses," said Pentangelo. "StaRN offers a way forward that provides short- and long-term benefits to hospitals and nurses, alike."

The first StaRN program launched in June of 2014 with a class of 52. Since then the program has grown rapidly and has expanded into several additional specialty areas. In 2016, the program had a total of 2,275 learners in specialties including Med/Surg, Telemetry, Critical Care and Behavioral Health. The program's success has led to plans for expansion to over 5,000 learners in 2017 and the addition of cohorts focused on developing new hires for Emergency Departments and the Operating Room.



\$100,000

savings achieved
per StaRN nurse

To learn more about how HealthTrust Workforce Solutions can help bridge the nursing skills gap, call us at **1.877.422.7356** or visit us at healthtrustpg.com/workforce.

HealthTrust strives to provide accurate, up-to-date information, but our materials should not be deemed as legal advice or counsel but rather as supplemental material offered as an informational component to HealthTrust's services.
©2016 HealthTrust Workforce Solutions, LLC. All rights reserved.