

## **Summary of Healthcare Retention Conference**

The nine Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago and co-sponsors, the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Illinois Hospital Association, and the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, convened a Healthcare Workforce Retention Conference on September 28, 2004, in Oak Brook, IL. The event was designed to address the labor shortage facing the healthcare industry in Northeast Illinois by providing practical examples of career development for the retention of healthcare workers. Over 100 participants and presenters attended, including representatives of area acute care and long-term care facilities, community colleges, and Workforce Boards.

Michael Johl, Chair of DuPage County Workforce Board, and Community Relations Manager, UPS, opened the event by welcoming participants and applauding their commitment to addressing retention in the healthcare sector.

Nancy Krier, Policy Consultant for Workforce, Illinois Hospital Association, and moderator for the event, introduced presenters from four different acute care facilities located in Illinois, Indiana, and Washington.

### ***Presentations***

#### **Clarian Health Partners**

Sherry Makely, Administrative Project Manager from **Clarian Health Partners** located in Indianapolis, provided a comprehensive overview of the Career Quest® □ Career Development program used at Clarian to enhance job performance and retention.

Clarian Health Partners is a consolidation of Methodist Hospital, Indiana University Hospital, and Riley Hospital for Children. It is a private, non-profit organization that employs in excess of 10,000 people throughout a statewide network.

- Workforce challenges facing Clarian include:
  - Statewide high unemployment rate
  - Competition with area health care employers – limited pool of qualified workers
  - Labor shortages in registered nurse and allied health professionals sector

Their approach to addressing workforce challenges is to use training and development opportunities to enhance employee recruitment, retention, job performance, and job satisfaction. Their tenet is “Grow Our Own Workforce”.

The Career Quest® □ (CQ) Program was started in 1997 to enhance job performance and retention. It is open to all employees and provides free career counseling, occupational and skill assessments, and classes. It offers people at all levels of the organization to achieve their potential. Employees set realistic goals, and progress from “where they are now” to “where they eventually want to be”.

- Employees choose one of four pathways:
  1. Enhance performance in current job
  2. Get accepted into a training program
  3. Get a new job within Clarian
  4. Life-long learning for personal growth

Once a pathway is chosen, they choose one of five tracks: clinical, business, support, facilities, or leadership. Career Quest® activities are designed to be self-paced and are done on an employee's own time unless approval from a supervisor allows otherwise.

- Benefits of employee participation:
  - Employees have 24/7 access to on-line courses
  - Courses include on-line assessments, learning assignments & resources
  - Interact electronically with other employees, counselors, and subject matter experts
  
- Outcomes from program include:
  - Recruitment and retention is improving
  - Increase in new hire interest to get a job at Clarian
  - Current employees “want to stay at Clarian” - other employers don't have Career Quest® program
  - Improved attendance & job performance among employees reported by managers
  - Increased employee morale
  - Enhanced service excellence provided by happy employees
  - Promoting entry-level workers expands diversity throughout organization
  - Strengthens community and families

The Career Quest® Program has been recognized as “best practice” by American Hospital Association & other organizations.

### **Sherman Health**

Jim Novak, Vice President of Human Resources, **Sherman Health**, thanked the co-sponsors of the conference and introduced his co-presenters, Ruth Peterson, Sherman's Training & Development Coordinator, and independent consultant, Claudia Voisard.

Sherman Health is an independent health system with 2400 employees. The Sherman Advocacy Model of Employee Benefits focuses on the “whole person” model.

- Sherman redesigned its employee benefits in 1991 to:
  - Help employees recognize personal responsibility is essential for their success
  - Encourage employees to optimize their health, talent & financial well being
  - Improve creativity and productivity

In order to take the “whole person” model one step further, Ruth Peterson worked with Claudia Voisard, consultant to Sherman Health, to create *Career Pathways*, an internal career development program. *Career Pathways* is designed to promote career resilience for a changing environment, career self-reliance, and a sense of how individual competencies contribute to total culture of competency.

The program encourages participants to view their current jobs as opportunities to develop internal & external networks of career resource people; market-relevant skills & competencies; a track record of significant accomplishments; keep work priorities aligned with organizational business strategies; and strengthen collaboration between managers and employees.

A career lattice model is used to allow employees to see opportunities within the hospital in a broader context.

- Career Lattice Model
  - Same job - different department
  - Same department - different job
  - Different job - different department
  - Clinical to managerial
  - Administration to clinical
  - Managerial to clinical

This broader view increases the self-esteem of each individual, affirms the importance of their present position, and they stay in the industry.

### **Advocate Health Care**

Steve Niems, Manager, Advocate Career and Transition Services from **Advocate Health Care**, a fully integrated not-for-profit-health care delivery system with 25,000 associates in over 200 sites, provided an overview of the Advocate Career Model.

The program, called “*Career Coach*”, is designed to help employees clarify “where they are now” to “where they want to be” through formalized one-on-one career counseling. The program’s focus is on career development through formalized one-on-one career counseling to interested associates. An important element is getting associates to realize that “up is not the only way”.

- Associates choose one of four pathways:
  1. Performance improvement/skill enhancement in current job
  2. Identification and referral into an educational or training program
  3. Progression into a new job
  4. Learning for personal or professional enrichment

The “*Career Coach*” Program is an on-going partnership between the associate and the coach with self-empowerment as a goal. A comprehensive resource manual has also been developed to equip Human Resource associates in their coaching experience.

- Payoffs for associates include:
  - Gaining self-determination
  - Organizational identity
  - Skill building
  - Supervisory relations
  - Job enrichment

Managers enjoy improved associate motivation, morale, communication & performance, and the organization benefits through increased productivity, recruitment, branding, program integration, and retention.

### **Seattle Partnership**

Jennifer Abermanis, Administrator of System and Logistics, **Children’s Hospital and Regional Center** in Seattle, and Sandy Clark, Strategic Initiatives Manager, **Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County** reported on the “*Seattle Career Pathways Program*”, an employer-driven partnership between hospitals, education, labor, and

workforce leaders. The Seattle program addresses the issues of labor shortages, an aging population, and educational capacity by allowing for clinical site coordination, stronger hospital-college partnerships, and improved articulation between training programs.

- The partnership focuses on three challenges:
  1. Develop and support the education system to meet employer demand
  2. Encourage health care progression
  3. Promote legislative action for long-term success-solutions
  
- Possible solutions include:
  - Clinical site coordination, stronger hospital –college partnerships
  - Raise additional funding for colleges
  - Hospital-based career specialists
  - Improve articulation between training programs
  - Leverage strategic contacts for key political support
  - Tuition assistance instead of reimbursement for employees

Career Pathways is a public-private partnership that connects incumbent workers to high demand healthcare training and resources. Experienced hospital staff educates the one-stop system to the nuances of healthcare environments.

### ***Question & Answer Session***

Following the presentations, all the presenters convened to accept questions from the conference participants, facilitated by Nancy Krier. The following are the issues discussed:

**Q: (Asked of Clarain Partners): What are your retention numbers? Such as new hires vs. promoting from within, which is more expensive?**

A: *Sherry Makely*: We did a follow up study, but I have limited data to share now. We are developing a newer database that will gather this data. Ask me in a year and I'll have that information. I can say that we have had a very positive response so far.

**Q: What makes Sherman Health vacancy rates so low?**

A: *Jim Novak*: Benefits are designed around people. Sherman makes sure its orientation process is cost-efficient, we take care to put people in appropriate locations where they can succeed, and a good recruitment process is also key. Currently, we have a 2.4% RN vacancy rate.

**Q: How do you convince administration to go from tuition reimbursement to tuition assistance?**

A: *Jennifer Abermanis*: Children's Hospital program takes a strict approach to accessing assistance. Employees must have worked at the hospital for at least 6 months, obtain supervisor recommendation, and prove that they have been accepted into a training program. There is also follow-up every 6 months to ensure the employee is still in the training program. Pre-requisites are the "building blocks" to continuation in the programs.

**Q: With the increase of productivity standards, does Clarian have a reduction of jobs?**

A: *Sherry Makely*: Not having major staff reductions, although there is a grim budget for specific departments. If employees undergo job reduction, (which usually occurs in a specific

area), they are offered outplacement assistance, and priority status for another job within the Clarian system that they are qualified for.

**Q: Is anyone doing succession planning for managers, staff?**

A: *Steve Niems*: Advocate has it through other auspices; it has management Summit & Everest leadership programs for key leaders; people have to be nominated in order to participate.

A: *Liz, Advocate Director of Workforce Planning*: On the clinical side – there is a four level STEPS program. Promotion at the bedside includes education, and research projects. Associates who successfully complete a level can be promoted into next step (level) on quantity (as needed) basis. There is a reception for them upon completion at each level, and they are invited back to speak at the next reception for that level.

A: *Sherry Makely*: Clarian has recently begun implementing a management program where employees negotiate goals for coming year with their supervisors.

**Q: How do high performance employees make time for Career Coach and education?**

A: *Steve Niems*: At Advocate, associates have to make time

**Q: Is there release time?**

A: *Sherry Makely*: At Clarian, release time is based upon departmental policy; it might be one hour per week, for example. There are also cohort groups on site & Clarian offers stipends to certain full-time programs

A: *Sandy Clark*: In the Seattle partnership, they have designed a letter of understanding for flexibility between hospitals and colleges.

A: *Jennifer Abermanis*: For example, Thursday is a class day for nurses. Also, we pay for career counseling meetings as a way of support.

A: *Sherry Makely*: The University brings classes on site and that makes attendance easier. Three of our programs pay stipends for attending: Pharm Tech, Med Tech, and Med Assisting. Students receive \$1200/month minus taxes, and they must sign a work commitment letter.

**Q: In terms of metrics, what are you planning to use to demonstrate success to your boards?**

A: *Sherry Makely*: Clarian looks at traditional ROI, retention, recruitment, job satisfaction, and service excellence. It's hard to assess the intrinsic value. We weigh against cost of interviews, cost of new hires, cost of non-productive time, but it's hard to get the money to build the database that is needed.

A: *Steve Niems*: Advocate designs metrics with what the program is supposed to do; start with baseline information that is out there right now through SHRM, IHA, etc. We have begun to build awareness of our programs. It's logical to measure the number of attendees entering each pathway, then watch the evolution of that pathway. I'd suggest watching your numbers first, and then create the metrics you'll use.

A: *Ruth Peterson*: Building our database at Sherman Health, we have 450 individuals in the database, but now need to do analysis. One observation that we've made is that we keep seeing the same individuals names over and over in the database; that tells me that they want to stay here.

A: *Jim Novak*: We re-recruit our employees. Often our top employees are in crisis; we'll send them proactively into career counseling. We help them examine all options and work through their career crisis.

Nancy Krier thanked the panelists for sharing their expertise with the group. Participants were encouraged to network during lunch session.

### ***Keynote Address***

Nancy Krier introduced the conference keynote speaker, Russ Jones, Partner, First Transitions. Russ offered the group his educational and entertaining impression of “Building a Development Culture”. Participants were provided with insights on why employees are the key to any organization’s success. By recognizing what is important to employees, and developing a culture of appreciation, organizations can better address the issue of retention. As recruitment and new hire costs continue to rise, companies want to know their employees, who you are and what you can do.

➤ Ideas to keep in mind:

- Executive interaction with employees breeds good will among employees
- Commitment to development of people through action, philosophy
- Trust among all in organization is also key
- Collaboration vs. competition, systems are aligned with messages
- “Your world is shaped by the thoughts you focus on most”

The “DNA approach” is useful in developing healthy organizations. “One size does not fit all” - every one is special in their own way and should be recognized for their unique talents and skills. Working to improve the organization from this foundation will lend it to more motivated, successful employees.

### ***Wrap-Up***

Nancy Krier thanked Russ Jones, the other presenters, and all the conference participants. She informed the group that the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, along with their partners, would continue to address the retention issue in the healthcare sector. The event concluded at 1:15pm.