

# Enhancing Nurse Leader Competencies While Impacting Retention

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

- Nurse leader competency assessment is essential for evaluating and validating the leadership skills, clinical expertise, and decision-making abilities required to guide nursing teams effectively.
- Through regular and structured competency assessments, organizations ensure that nurse leaders are equipped to manage complex healthcare environments, drive quality improvement initiatives, and inspire excellence in patient care.
- This process also identifies opportunities for professional growth, supporting the ongoing development of strong, effective nurse leaders.
- Average annual Nurse Director turnover is reported at 7.5% to 12% nationally.

### Purpose

- Create the 2024 Nurse Director Competencies list of educational topics.
- Identify the impact that competency assessments and education sessions had on Nurse Director turnover.

### Framework:

- Several frameworks were used that included the Donna Wright Competency Assessment Model (DWCAM) and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) core competencies.

**Learning objectives: After reviewing this poster, the learners will be able to:**

- Identify key nurse leader core and explain how strengthening these competencies contributes to improved nurse retention rates.
- Describe evidence-based strategies that nurse leaders can implement to foster a supportive work environment, enhance team engagement, and reduce turnover among nursing staff.

## METHODS

### Setting and Participants:

- Settings inclusive of all specialty practice areas.
- Participants included Nurse Directors from Patient Care Areas.

### Intervention/Process:

- Survey sent to all Nurse Directors ( $N = 62$ ) identifying core competencies and education. Approximately 50% completed ( $n = 30$ ).
- Focus group included nurse directors with varying experience.
- The nurse directors were split into three groups facilitated by members of the Center for Nursing Excellence Team. Each group was assigned different AONL categories of core competencies and developed a competency objective with multiple verification methods.
- A list of educational topics was identified and the Nurse Director Educational Series was developed.

### Data Collection and Analysis:

- Simple percentages were calculated.

## RESULTS

### Key Findings:

- Voluntary Nurse director turnovers so far this year doubled (14.3%) when compared to 2024 (7.1%). However, when analyzing these raw numbers, these percentages equates to 4 Nurse Directors leaving the organization in 2022, 2024, and 2025. The exception was in 2023 ( $N=0$ ) where none left.
- Majority of Nurse Directors who attended the Nurse Director Educational Sessions indicated it increased their knowledge regarding the specific topics and improved their leadership.

### Actionable Data:

- Since this process was successful, during 2025 will focus with the Assistant Nurse Manager group repeating the same process.

### Interpretation:

- The implementation of comprehensive nurse director competencies, verified through multiple methods and supported by targeted educational series, has established a strong foundation for nurse leader development in 2025.
- Nurse Director voluntary turnover % remains consistent..
- Notably, the overwhelming majority of nurse leaders expressed confidence that participation in the Nurse Director Educational Series will enhance their leadership skills, underscoring the perceived value and positive impact of this initiatives.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Virtua Health Nurse Director voluntary turnover percentages are consistent with national averages.
- The Nurse Director Educational Series will continue to help address gaps identified.
- Supplementing existing Nurse Director Orientation re several new resources:
  - A DNP pilot project addressing competence through mentorship
  - A web-based curriculum developed for new Nurse Directors was purchased through a third party entity.

## REFERENCES

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### Contributors:

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