

Elevating OR Orientation to Onboarding: Strengthening Engagement and Safety

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Dept Name: Hospital Main Operating Room

Site Name: Advocate Christ Medical Center (ACMC)



Background

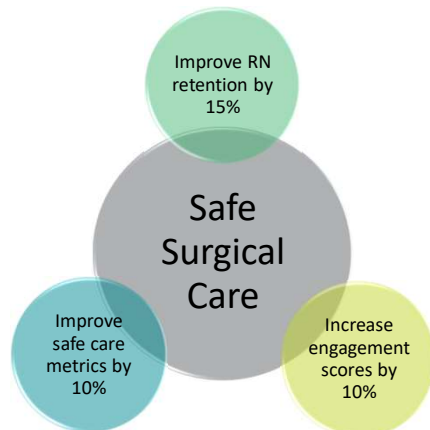
- Intraoperative nursing shortage in ACMC (Level 1 Trauma Center)
- Hiring new graduate and novice nurses
- Previous orientation lacked structured support
- Redesign to a comprehensive onboarding model that fosters engagement, retention, and safety.

Objective

To elevate the traditional orientation to a comprehensive onboarding model with:

- Standardized competency milestones
- Collaborative mentorship
- Bi-directional communication & support

Project Goals:



Approach

- Multidisciplinary team:
 - Surgical Service Director, Manager, RN Clinical Leads, Nurse Educator, and Surgical Specialty Resource (SSR) nurses.

Approach (continuation)

Previous Orientation	New Onboarding
Daily preceptor feedback given to educator Fixed weekly rotation	Daily preceptor feedback given to SSR nurse Flexible rotation based on experience & feedback
Sterile Processing observation for novice RNs Educator responsible for daily assignments	Sterile Processing observation all RNs SSR nurse responsible for daily assignments
90-day evaluation completed by educator	90-day evaluation completed collaboratively
AORN Periop 101 only	AORN Periop 101 Periop Academy course
No formal orientation competency checklist	Competency-based orientation checklist
No service line orientation to supplies & equipment	First day of each service line orientation
No progress meetings	Weekly SSR, Leader, and educator meetings
No leadership follow-up	Monthly leadership check-ins
No meeting with executive director & chief of surgery	Quarterly executive director & chief of surgery meetings
8-week scrub school	8-week scrub school
Educator rounds	Educator rounds
Day 1 department orientation	Day 1 department orientation

Transformative Practices Implemented

- SSR- lead development & daily progress review
- Structured specialty rotation transition
- Interdisciplinary and leadership oversight
- Competency-base checklist & Peri-op Academy course

Method of Evaluation

- 2024 vs 2025 Safety Culture Survey Comparison
- Retention Tracking: 12-month employment status
- Feedback loop: Based on documentation review

Results

Engagement Outcomes: Score completion improved from 30% to 68% = **↑ 33% Improvement**

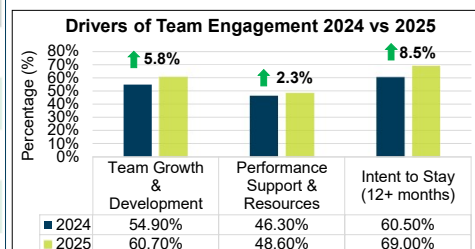


Figure 1. Engagement results based on 2024 and 2025 Culture of Safety Survey

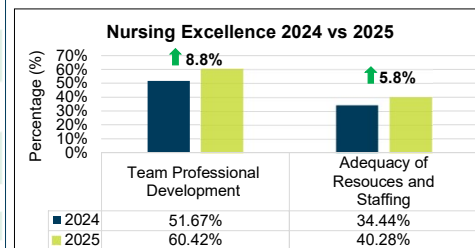


Figure 2. Nursing excellence based on 2024 and 2025 Culture of Safety Survey

Safety Culture Outcomes:

58.3% to 60.7% = **↑ 4.1% Improvement**

Year	Retention			
	12-Month	Losses	Role Impact	Financial Impact
2024	85.54%	5 Left	3 RNs 2 Techs	≈ \$600,000 loss
2025	94.10%	2 Left	2 Techs	\$0 loss

Figure 3. 2024 retention within 1 year; 2025 retention to date within 1 year.

Discussion

- Strengthened belonging, competency progression, & communication
- Reduced practice variability
- SSR nurses' involvement improved individualized support & accelerated skill development
- Created psychological safety for new staff
- Greater interdisciplinary visibility & situational awareness
- Improvement in retention & stability
- RN turnover ↓ ≈ \$600,000 saved
- Improvement in productivity & efficiency
- Standardized onboarding reinforced team culture & readiness

Implications for Practice

Model supports transferability to other specialty areas requiring advanced skills

Replication Strategies

- Standardized competency framework
- Specialty-specific resource roles
- Bi-directional communication

Future Opportunities:

- Evaluate 24-month retention and engagement
- Expand simulation-based competency validation
- Measure efficiency: First case on-time starts & turnover

Acknowledgements

Special appreciation is extended to the Surgical Services Leadership Team, Nurse Educator, and all Surgical Specialty Resource Nurses for their collaboration in developing the onboarding structure & monitoring competency progression. We also acknowledge the engagement of new hires for providing feedback that strengthened the program.



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