Developing a Preceptor Program: Laying the Foundation for Success

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Objectives

• At the end of the presentation the learner will be able to:
  — Identify the components of a comprehensive preceptor program
  — Describe strategies that can be used to develop a preceptor program
  — Understand the role an effective preceptor can have on retention of new employees

Overview

• Why a Preceptor program is important
• Designing your program
• Components of a comprehensive preceptor program
• On going support and education
• Rewards and recognition
Why It’s Important

- Chronic staffing shortages mean increased numbers of nurses in orientation
- Low staff satisfaction = increased turnover = $$$
  - Cost to unit – decreased job satisfaction and low morale
  - Decreased job satisfaction leads to resignations
  - Resignations have significant financial impact – the average cost of training and orientation for one RN is fifty thousand dollars
  - Once in place this cycle is very difficult to break

Benefits to a Preceptor Program

- Preceptor training can standardize processes
  - What does a competent nurse “look” like?
  - What criteria should preceptors use to identify competent nurses?
  - What skills are required to be considered competent? Will differ according to practice environment
  - Are orientation and preceptor programs designed to ensure this happens?

Benefits to Preceptor Program

- Provide clear, consistent expectations related to the work of a preceptor
  - What do you need them to do?
  - What are you willing to invest in the process?
  - What tools can be developed and utilized to support this very important work?
    - Standardized forms – assessment and evaluation
    - Feedback templates – formal, defined intervals
    - Templates for action plans
Addressing the Need

• Start with a Needs Assessment
  – Who to include? Consider the following
    • Preceptors
    • Charge Nurses and Staff Nurses
    • Unit/Staff Educators
    • Nurse Managers
    • Nursing Professional Development Specialists/Central Education department staff
    • Nursing Administrators

Addressing the “Must Haves”

• Define what you see as essential
  – Selection criteria for preceptors?
    • Technical skills
    • Communication/Interpersonal skills
    • Knowledge of the organization
  – Mandatory preceptor training prior to serving?
  – How are you planning to deliver content?
    • Traditional classroom learning
    • On-line training
    • Combination of the above

Needs Assessment

• Review current program and
  – Identify opportunities to improve
  – Gaps that currently exist
  – Area that need to be addressed
• Consider multiple methods of accessing the information
  – Surveys
  – Focus groups
  – Evaluations
  – Committees
Needs Assessment

• Surveys
  – What do you want to know – ask the right questions
  – Look for themes in the comment section
  – Decide who you will query
  – Decide if everyone get the same survey or will survey be specific to each demographic group

Needs Assessment

• Focus groups
  – Can be good way to get information
  – Be careful how you design questions
  – Need careful selection of facilitator
    • Unbiased
    • Use appropriate follow up questions
    • Keep control of group

Needs Assessment

• Review Evaluation Information
  – Courses taught previously
  – Information regarding preceptors (end of orientation evaluations submitted to unit managers/educators)

• Committees
  – Attend Nursing Education council/groups
  – Staff Nurse councils/groups
  – Unit staff meetings
Developing a Comprehensive Program

• When planning a comprehensive program
  – Be realistic and practical
  – Consider developing an implementation plan
  – Clearly outline expectations and develop outcome measurements for return on investment
  – Identify what resources will be required
    • Time
    • Talent
    • Financial – both cost of program and cost of staff time
    • Support – rooms, audio-visual, supplies, technology

Comprehensive Program

• What are the components of a comprehensive program?
  – Classes – consider naming your program, for example, Preceptor Academy.
  – Websites – information, templates, contacts, schedules
  – Email – subscription service
  – Newsletters
  – Social Media - consider hospital policies

Classes

• Introductory/Basic
  – Overview of orientation
  – Roles and responsibilities
  – Principles of Adult Learning and Learning Styles
  – Diversity – cultural, generational
  – Feedback - formal and informal, how to give and receive, timing, part of learning process
  – Competency Assessment
    • Clinical/Technical skills
    • Communication – verbal and written (documentation)
    • Critical Thinking
Classes

• Advanced Classes
  – Communication Skills
  – Competency Assessment
    • How to handle corrections
    • Considerations such as timing and efficiency
    • What to do when competence is an issue
  – Difficult Conversations
    • Scenarios
    • Role play
    • Small group work

• Advanced Curriculum
  – Working with challenging orientees
    • Defensive/Angry
    • The Know it all (or not)
    • Whiners and Criers
    • The unmotivated (or lazy)
  – What to do when new staff are struggling
    • Identifying the correct problem
    • Having a difficult conversation
    • Moving your concerns up
    • Documentation of concerns
    • Developing action plans for success

• Working with Students
  – Preceptor role – what is different when working with student nurses
  – Adult Learning principles and Learning Styles
  – Overview of responsibilities for the following:
    • Instructor
    • Student
    • Preceptor
Classes

• Working with Students
  – Policies and procedures that are “must know”
  – Critical thinking skills
    • How to foster and encourage this in student
    • Recognize that students are “skill-centric”

Classes

• Unit Based Preceptor Classes
  – Can be considered based on resources
  – Classes can be tailored to meet specific unit or department needs
  – Unique or different staffing patterns
    – Home Health
    – Outpatient
    – Psychiatric

On-Going

• One time class on a specific topic
• Preceptor group for sharing and support
• Advanced topic seminars – series of classes on topics that preceptors have identified as needed
• Unit activities
Consultant Role

- Help unit/departments with their specific needs and situations
  - Tenured preceptors who are “burnt out”
  - Unit with high turnover and many novice preceptors
  - Unique staffing patterns that present challenges in accessing usual classes

Websites

- Can be good sources of information
  - Class schedules
    - “Ask the expert” or “What would you do?”
  - Preceptor of the month
  - Have folks write about their preceptor

Email and Newsletters

- Preceptor Newsletters
  - Send out to everyone who has attended a class
  - Send to managers/charge nurses/staff educators
  - Good way to stay connected to preceptors
  - Opportunity for quick one page learning
  - Make it fun
    - Tips on giving feedback - the “BEER” method
    - What advice do veteran nurses have for new grads?
    - What do new grads say they need from veteran staff?
Awareness of Program

Direct Appeal – mail
Emails and newsletters (hospital wide, unit)
Website
Unit Staff meetings
Educator and Manager Councils
Bulletin Boards – areas that have high traffic and visibility
Word of mouth – do not underestimate the power of satisfied learners

Rewards and Recognition

• Rewarding Preceptors will increase their commitment to the role
• Preceptors are a valuable asset and should be treated as such
• Direct monetary reward may not be realistic
• Consider budget for smaller items
  — ID badge pulls/Pens
  — Vouchers for movie tickets, gift shop, cafeteria

Reward and Recognition

The Power of Thanks and Gratitude
  Hand written notes – mailed to home
  Notes put in personnel file, copy leaders
  Public recognition
    Staff meetings
    Nurses Week activities
    Newsletters
Questions?

• Thank you for your attendance!
• Contact information
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