Connecting Employee Well-Being and Quality
Highlighting the link between workforce wellness and quality of patient care

There is little debate around the importance of optimizing today’s workforce to achieve the most skilled, culturally attuned and satisfied workforces possible. There is plenty of conversation, however, about how to enhance employee health and how to measure those efforts as a component of workforce improvement initiatives.

This is the third Children’s Hospital Association report exploring how to build a children’s hospital as a high reliability organization—ensuring optimal health outcomes and high satisfaction for employees and patients.

Opportunities to Invest
1. Workforce well-being analytics
2. Data-driven staffing models
3. Quality and training
4. Tools and technology for recruitment and retention

Read more at childrenshospitals.org/workforce

Children’s hospital leaders are discovering that finding solutions requires more than putting two data points together. Workforce optimization must be addressed from multiple angles and by multiple departments across an organization.

New Partners at the Table

Children’s Mercy Hospital Kansas City (Children’s Mercy) is improving the lives of its workforce, while supporting retention and recruitment goals, through a holistic approach to employee health and safety. In 2014, the hospital initiated the Wellness Center, an employee primary care clinic that would help hospital employees avoid absences for doctor visits. The on-site clinic was a success, and leaders recognized an opportunity to promote workforce wellness.

In the hospital industry, it’s not as common to see the Quality and Safety team meeting with the HR benefits team. At Children’s Mercy, those teams have come together, and the growing collaboration helps create a multi-pronged approach to wellness; acknowledging that employee wellness is essential to the quality of care.

The Wellness Center’s continued growth in popularity provides the foundation to expand offerings to match employee health and well-being needs. Carol Kemper, vice president, Quality and Safety at Children’s Mercy, says quality and safety leaders function with the belief they can continually help people develop skills as problem solvers and improvement specialists.

“We focus on continuous quality improvement related to patients and the workforce through respect for people,” says Kemper. “We know from evaluating aspects of high reliability that an engaged workforce finds the work more meaningful. And a healthier employee is also a safer employee.”
Carolyn Ehlers, senior director, Compensation, Benefits and Wellness, looks at the workforce through the HR lens. Ehlers says her team takes a holistic approach to employee health and safety.

“We analyze employee assistance provider activity, employee claims data, health assessment surveys and Wellness Center referrals,” she says. “A couple of years after opening, data indicated the need for two full-time behavioral health service providers, and in 2019 we added motion health and dietetic services.”

For motion health, clinicians evaluate an employee’s gait and strength, and the evaluation guides the creation of targeted exercise regimens to reduce injuries. “Our collaborative work focuses on helping employees be productive while feeling good longer, respecting others and reducing cultural hierarchies,” says Ehlers. Kemper adds, “Our patient safety department partners with employee health to address stress, fatigue, and obesity, which we know lead to patient and employee safety concerns.”

Understanding the Return on Workforce Programs

Children’s hospitals can evaluate data and health programs, such as the Children’s Mercy Wellness Center, to understand the return on workforce initiatives. Whether your organization is starting a walking program or operating a health center like Children’s Mercy, evaluating the data helps teams understand how employees are affected and if the program is fostering progress. Consider these ideas for analyzing data:

**Determine your drivers**

Begin with an anchor for your analytics. By first identifying a driver, you can understand the performance of different variables for their contribution to the predictive accuracy of that driver. Drivers to examine include unit engagement, patient safety events, employee safety events or ED utilization.

**Compare data at the department level**

Remember that different departments of the hospital usually score differently on measures such as patient experience and leadership performance.

**Consider several drivers and attributes for measures**

Employee use of the ED often indicates a lack of access to primary care. High variation exists when evaluating children’s hospitals’ claims data on ED utilization by employee position level. Consider evaluating data on some of the following as potential attributes of ED use.
Consistently high workloads may pose a risk to patient safety. The industry cites several employee and patient experience metrics may also be related to safety events. Consider working with your quality department to begin tracking potential attributes of the workforce along with safety events.

Employee engagement is beyond making the workforce satisfied or happy. Employees must feel emotionally committed to drive positive patient experiences. Consider measuring some of the following as potential attributes of engagement.

If you have ideas on correlations to run using CHA data product CHART, Prospect or PHIS, email us. Sharing and collaboration will put children’s hospital on the road toward understanding what factors lead to continuous progress relating to workforce improvement.