

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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Building Nursing from the Ground Up

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Background: Throughout the health care community there are structured and well-developed medical structures and leadership with differentiated roles, specialties, and systems for collaboration. However, within health care settings it is unusual to find this type of structure and organization for nursing. In our system there had been no formal region-wide nursing structure or leadership. Nurses were deployed across the 16 medical offices throughout the region without specific region wide oversight or design. Due to this lack of structure nurse interviews indicated a widespread perception that nurses were not valued or recognized for what they brought to the organization and often nursing perspectives were not represented at health plan strategy discussions. In order to enhance nursing morale, define nursing roles, and in the process improve recruitment and retention of nursing positions, this project was undertaken to build a nursing department at Kaiser, from the ground up.

Methods: The Vice President of Operations supported the initiation of a "Director of Nursing Services, Strategy & Innovation" position to lead the nearly 1100 Nursing Services personnel in the Colorado region. The new system design redefined reporting structures to integrate nurses into Nursing Services. Additionally new nursing leadership roles were implemented including: Regional Nursing Guidelines Coordinator, Regional Nursing Practice Coordinator, Regional Nursing Education Coordinator, and an administrative assistant to directly support the new Nursing Leadership.

Results: After a complete year with the new nursing structure clear results are stratified into two areas: organizational change, and nursing support/benefits. Organizational changes included the inclusion of a variety of departments into nursing leadership groups, structured physician and labor management partnerships with nursing, and the implementation of key nursing workgroups facilitated by a member of the Nursing Leadership Council. Nursing support/benefits projects included the development of nursing recognition programs, the completion of a nursing career ladder, role definitions and qualifications, nursing training programs, a nursing scholarship fund, and substantial work on nursing guidelines.

Conclusion: The recognition of nurses as a unique profession and organizational structuring of nurses overseeing nursing, led to profound positive insight and outcomes for the nurses region wide.