

Magnet status



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

While many nurses are campaigning for staffing ratios, others are putting their hopes in a different kind of “magnet” – hospitals throughout North America (and one in the United Kingdom) that have received special designation by the American Nurses Association (ANA) through its American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Some supporters of the “Magnet hospital” concept view it as a substitute for ratios, others don’t. The term “Magnet” was coined in the 1980s, when researchers for the American Academy of Nursing (AAN), and ANA affiliate, began analyzing hospitals with a good record of nurse retention. The forty-six facilities studied in the original 1983 report were places where nurses, not surprisingly, said they liked to work. These hospitals had low turnover and vacancy rates, although they were located in areas with a lot of labor market competition for nurses (Gordon, 2005).

Hospitals that act as a “magnet” for excellence create a work environment that distinguishes, rewards, and promotes proficient nursing. Organizations that attract nurses to magnet hospitals support better patient care and outcomes, including a strong presence of nurses in patient care decision making, a high level of collegiality between nurses and physicians, and more time for nurses to care for and teach patients, and the encouragement and expectation of critical thinking. Magnet designation is also an effective marketing tool for attracting patients and for recruiting and retaining quality nursing staff.

Although the magnet designation provides numerous benefits for a hospital, the road to attaining it is not an easy one. The written application for magnet status must demonstrate how the hospital implements the Scope and

Standards for Nursing Administrators and how it incorporates the forces of magnetism within nursing services. It can take two or more years to perform the assessment, compile the documentation, and have the site visit by magnet reviewers (Grossman, 2007).

Some tips on making the journey to magnet designation a successful one include the following:

- Get buy-in front from executive management, nurse managers, and nursing staff
- Seek advice from other organizations that have navigated the process
- Organize the effort across all organizational levels and departments
- Establish a timeline to keep team efforts on track and promote team focus
- Coordinate personality styles and team members' strengths, teaming "thinkers" with "doers"

Hospitals meet the magnet standards by having a flatter organizational structure that allows nurses more say in both patient care and how their jobs are designed, making the chief nursing officer part of the executive team, hiring more staff nurses and reducing or eliminating agency and travel nurses, and supporting top nurses in pursuing research and advanced degrees (Porche, 2005).

References:

Gordon, S. (2005). *Nursing Against the Odds: How Health Care Cost Cutting, Media Stereotypes, and Medical Hubris Undermine Nurses and Patient Care*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Grossman, S. (2007). *Mentoring in Nursing: A Dynamic and Collaborative Process*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Porche, R. A. (2005). *Issues and Strategies for Nurse Leaders: Meeting Hospital Challenges Today*. Oakbrook Terrace, IL: Joint Commission Resources.