

CASE STUDY

for U.S. health care providers

Novant Health-NHRMC's Resiliency Governance Council

Bolstering employee well-being and increasing engagement of frontline nurses

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Overview

The challenge

To support frontline staff during the pandemic, most health care providers rapidly multiplied the number of employee well-being and resilience resources. While these initiatives were essential, they were often uncoordinated and focused only on trauma response—while other employee needs, such as social and financial health, were unmet.

The organization

Novant Health-New Hanover Regional Medical Center (NH-NHRMC) is an 800-bed hospital with outpatient facilities located in Wilmington, North Carolina. In February 2021, New Hanover Regional Medical Center joined Novant Health, an integrated network that operates across four states.

The approach

In 2019, NH-NHRMC's team reviewed their existing resilience initiatives and identified areas where employees needed additional support. Based on this work, the CHRO defined five elements of employee resilience: spiritual, physical, mental, social, and financial. The system's HR and nursing departments then created and led a resilience-specific shared governance council with committees assigned to address each element.

The result

NH-NHRMC leveraged their council structure during the pandemic to amplify and distribute community donations, along with providing staff emotional and mental support. Moving forward, the council will refocus around long-term resilience needs to redefine NH-NHRMC's employer value proposition as a best-in-class supporter of employee well-being.

Approach

How Novant Health-New Hanover Regional Medical Center improved employee well-being through a frontline-driven governance council

In 2020, Novant Health-New Hanover Regional Medical Center created a shared governance council to address five key elements of resilience: spiritual, physical, mental, social, and financial. The goal of the council is to identify emerging employee well-being needs and curate a comprehensive set of resources to address them.

Three steps

Novant Health-New Hanover Regional Medical Center's leaders identified three key steps to creating their council:

01 Create a comprehensive definition of employee well-being

02 Assign a council to address each element of well-being

03 Solicit frontline staff feedback on resilience efforts

01 Create a comprehensive definition of employee well-being

Review existing employee resilience resources

NH-NHRMC leaders began in 2020 by reviewing the system's existing resilience efforts across the health system. While individually effective, these initiatives were limited in two ways:

- First, different departments across the organization were creating duplicative resources. For example, the community engagement, spiritual care, and behavioral health teams were separately addressing employee mental health needs.
- While the organization offered more support for employee well-being than ever, staff feedback indicated that it still wasn't sufficient. As a result of their review, leaders realized that existing resilience resources centered on responding to trauma were not fully comprehensive of employee needs, especially as the initial Covid-19 surges subsided.

Create a comprehensive definition of well-being

After soliciting employee feedback on resource gaps, the system's CHRO created an organization definition of employee well-being that extended beyond trauma response. The definition spanned five elements of well-being: spiritual, physical, mental, social, and financial care.

02 Assign a council to address each element of well-being

NH-NHRMC leaders created designated subcommittees to ensure employee needs for each element of well-being were met. Each committee has two co-chairs with related expertise and 3-5 frontline volunteers to support programing. The steering committee and co-chairs of each element meets on a bi-weekly basis to report on current resilience efforts and discuss frontline feedback they've received. The steering committee also allocates community donations (e.g. money, food) to the appropriate subcommittee for distribution to the frontline.



2. ASSIGN A COUNCIL TO ADDRESS EACH ELEMENT OF WELL-BEING (CONT.)

Resilience shared governance council structure

Committee name	Co-chairs	Duties
Steering Committee	CNE, Director of Spiritual Care, and Directors of Compensation, Benefits, and Employee Fitness Center	Meets with all the co-chairs of the five element every two weeks to discuss progress and address any barriers
Physical	Directors of Fitness Center and Nutrition Center	Hosts virtual fitness classes and cooking classes
Social	Administrator for Community Affairs and Director for Grants and Appropriations	Advertises employee achievements on social media, and supports an NH-NHRMC-specific app that houses all employee well-being and resilience resources
Mental	Nurse Manager and Director of Community Engagement	Develops strategies and techniques to cope with stressors and challenges
Spiritual	Director for Foundation and Manager of Company Police	Provides individual spiritual counseling and hones resilience messaging from chaplains
Financial	Business Managers from HR and Support Services	Offers educational sessions on emerging employee financial questions, created a digital library for NH-NHRMC's Home Ownership Program (HOPE) with information on down payments, home equity, and insurance from realtors and financial advisors

03 Solicit frontline staff feedback on resilience efforts

NH-NHRMC's resilience council regularly surveyed their frontline staff to ensure that staff needs for each element of resilience were met. They do this in two ways:

1. Nurse managers use organizational cell phones to communicate with frontline staff about their well-being on both a daily and weekly basis
2. HR leaders tracked resilience-related questions on annual engagement surveys, including open-ended survey questions used to identify emerging gaps in well-being strategy

Resilience-related drivers in NH-NHRMC engagement survey

The amount of job stress I feel is reasonable

I rarely lose sleep over work issues

I can enjoy my personal time without focusing on work matters

I am able to disconnect from work communications during my free time (emails/phones/etc.)

I am able to free my mind from work when I am away from it

Results

Early efforts from the resiliency governance council

NH-NHRMC's early resiliency efforts focused on helping staff mitigate the impact of Covid-19. In addition to offering spiritual and emotional support, the governance council acted as a central hub for equitably distributing and amplifying the impact of community donations. For example, the council organized the following events to improve staff morale during 2020:

- **Gratitude Lane:** Committee leaders partnered with community organizations to serve over 1,200 meals to staff and families for 10 weeks
- **12 days of holiday cheer:** 12-days of meals, mental health activities, and appreciation for frontline staff in different units.
- **Letters for staff:** Hundreds of letter from community members, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts delivered to staff.
- **Classic car parade and civilian flyover:** organized by local car and flying clubs.

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