Effects of COVID-19 on newly licensed registered nurses
Comparative assessment and resources for guiding change

Background
While the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nursing workforce remain to be seen, we know newly licensed registered nurses are a particularly vulnerable portion of the nursing workforce.

Newly licensed registered nurses (NLRNs) have experienced significant changes in their preparation for the professional setting; including reduced clinical hours and shifting to virtual education and events. Even in normal circumstances, the first year of practice for a NLRN can be challenging and results in a high level of turnover. This is evident in a rate of about 17.5% of new nurses leaving their first job within one year of starting their jobs.¹ The full impact of the pandemic on NLRNs remains to be seen; however, data from Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Program™ participants sheds some light on their experiences.

Key findings – 2019 compared to 2020*

- Nurse resident (NR) resignations within a year of hire due to the pandemic crisis increased, even before the close of 2020 data collection (from 1% to 3.5%)**
- More terminations due to NCLEX failure (from 0.5% to 3.1%)**
- Higher number of terminations as a result of being unhappy with job or facility (from 6.8% to 9.6%)**
- NRs are more stressed (6.6% increase in other† stressors)
- NRs report lower unit engagement (2.42 versus 2.37)‡
- NRs rate the overall residency program higher (2.95 versus 3.00)‡
- NRs’ satisfaction with their benefits is higher

Observations and next steps

- Examine data at your organization level and leverage national benchmark data from Vizient/AACN program to assess differences in job satisfaction and stress among NRs beginning their career during the pandemic.
- Share data, findings and observations with nursing leadership.
- Continue to have NR program seminars. Support and connection are critical for NRs. Emphasize curriculum content areas to respond to resident needs. (e.g., stress management, interprofessional communication)
- Support NRs and promote engagement and satisfaction in their careers.
- Engage NRs at the unit level to address decreasing engagement. (e.g., committees, listening sessions, huddles) and monitor engagement.

* All numbers are statistically significant at a P < 0.05. Data reflect registered nurses in 2019 compared to 2020 at the 12-month period.
** Percent of total terminations
† Other is an option in addition to: finances, childcare, student loans, living situation or personal relationship
‡ Based on a Likert scale, 1-4
NCLEX = National Council Licensure Examination

For more information about the Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Program™, contact nrpinfo@vizientinc.com or visit vizientinc.com/NRP.

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