

Stop Turnover in the First Three Years

Best practices for retaining millennial staff

Look inside for

- The factors behind early turnover
- Key strategies to give millennials a sense of early accomplishment
- Best practices to identify and redirect staff planning to leave

HR Advancement Center

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The HR Advancement Center is deeply grateful to the individuals and organizations that shared their insights, analysis, and time with us. We would especially like to recognize the following individuals for being particularly generous with their time and expertise.

Aurora Health Care

Bel Air, MD
Troy Dennhof
Chirag Padalia

Baptist Health System

Jacksonville, FL
Beth Mehaffey

**Baton Rouge General
Medical Center**

Baton Rouge, LA
Paul Douglas
Jared LeDoux

Methodist Health System

Dallas, TX
Cheryl Flynn

Norton Healthcare

Louisville, KY
Jackie Beard
Tony Bohn
Nick Netherly
Christy Ralston

Novant Health

Winston-Salem, NC
Susan Brooks
Marilyn Gilliam
Janet Hill-Smith

**Overlake Hospital
Medical Center**

Bellevue, WA
Lisa Brock
Lisa Morten

Scripps Health

San Diego, CA
Cyndy Johanson
Cindy Steckel
Veronica Zaman

**UnityPoint Health –
Methodist | Proctor**

Peoria, IL
Jill Dodaro
Chelsey Getz
Lisa Plantamura

**Vanderbilt University
Medical Center**

Nashville, TN
Candy Lindsey
Sherri Stringfellow

Executive Summary

Turnover: A clear and troubling trend

Turnover is a growing challenge for many health care organizations. While the proportion of turnover due to first-year departures has always been higher than anyone would like—the industry has reached a point now where more than a quarter of all turnover is due to employees leaving in their first year. Many of these staff are millennials, which begs the question: Are millennials a different type of employee, requiring different engagement and retention strategies than those used for other generations?

The millennial employee profile

Our data analysis on this topic revealed some good news: the workplace attributes that engage millennials are nearly identical to the attributes that engage all staff. This means organizations don't need to pursue a separate engagement strategy for their millennial staff.

But that's not the whole story. Further analysis revealed that engagement alone is not enough to retain millennials: there is a sizable gap between millennial engagement and loyalty scores in their first three years of tenure. If you can retain them past the three-year mark, the gap between their levels of loyalty and engagement starts to close.

Organizations need to supplement their engagement strategy with a specific retention strategy for early-tenure millennials.

How bolstering new hires' ability to cope with workload can improve retention

All too often, tenured staff do not go out of their way to welcome new hires—in fact, data collected by our research staff indicates that many hospital employees actively disparage new hires. It's hard enough for new hires to keep up with the pace and intensity of their new jobs without dealing with difficult or unfriendly peers. Organizations need to make sure new hires have the emotional support they need to cope with their workload and feel part of a community.

In this excerpt of our study *Stop Turnover in the First Three Years: Best Practices for Retaining Millennial Staff* you will get two strategies that will help you ensure that new hires have the resources they need to keep up with their workload and remain at your organization beyond their first three years.

▶ **Bolster New Hires' Ability
to Cope with Workload**

1. Professional Mentor Corps
2. Cross-Calibrated New Hire Feedback

The representative feedback from millennial employees shown here illustrates an unfortunate reality for new hires: tenured staff may not go out of their way to welcome them (and in fact, may actively disparage new hires). It's hard enough for new hires to keep up with the pace and intensity of work in their new jobs without dealing with difficult or unfriendly peers. Organizations need to make sure new hires have the emotional support they need to cope with their workload and feel part of the community.

Mentors, peer new hires, and managers can play key roles in building a strong support network for new hires. The two best practices in this strategy will help you create opportunities for all three groups to help new hires cope with their workload.

Not Easy Being the New Person on the Team

Representative Open-Ended Feedback from Employees Under 35 with Less Than Three Years' Tenure

“

I wish there was a more welcoming atmosphere for new people. **When I first started, I was told by a couple of staff members that they did not like new people**—that can make the new job experience very intimidating.

“

I might recommend education for current employees on embracing new ones. **Starting here was very stressful for me**, but it has gotten better.

“

I felt new-employee training was lacking in general and in my department specifically. **I'd like to feel more of a collegial environment...and not fear being judged if I ask questions.**

“

I am a new employee and I am just beginning to like my job. In the beginning it was rough, and I didn't feel comfortable in my department, let alone around my supervisor. **I am beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.**

Professional Mentor Corps

Practice in Brief

Organization establishes unit-based mentor program in which each mentor works with a group of new hires for two years; the goal is to ensure new hires have effective emotional support to help them cope with their workload.

Rationale

The common practice of assigning new hires a “peer buddy” for the first few months does not provide enough support to help new hires cope with their workload. An informal buddy program can lead to variable quality of support and peer buddies are often not equipped to provide longer-term emotional support. By establishing a unit-based mentor program, organizations need fewer mentors, so they can choose staff who are passionate about mentoring (and invest more heavily in each mentor’s development). Furthermore, a unit-based mentor program establishes natural cohorts of peer new hires who can discuss their experiences with each other.

Implementation Components

Component 1: Allocate 0.2 FTE (HR staff member or educator) to Coordinate Program

Before starting a mentor program, organizational leaders should identify whether they can devote 20% of a staff member’s time to supporting the program. The mentor program is unlikely to be sustainable or effective without this dedicated support.

Component 2: Select One Mentor for Each Unit

Managers nominate experienced staff to serve as mentors for groups of new hires. One mentor works with approximately eight new hires. This dramatically reduces the number of mentors needed and also establishes a natural cohort of peers to discuss their experiences.

Component 3: Give Mentors and New Hires Dedicated Time to Meet

Mentors and new hires have paid time—up to 12 hours—to spend in cohort meetings and one-on-one mentor conversations. Dedicated time is the most important resource for the mentoring program, but organizations may also choose to give managers discretionary funds to support mentoring activities.

Component 4: Track Mentoring Activities and Feedback

Mentors must submit a log documenting their activities and the general themes of feedback from new hires (protecting confidentiality of individual new hires). This documentation not only helps instill mentor accountability for meeting with new hires but also gives organizational leaders insight into new hires’ concerns and questions.

Practice Assessment

This practice requires substantial investment to be effective. However, the return may be equally large: giving new hires structured emotional support should help them manage their workload and reduce turnover.

HR Advancement Center Grades
Practice Impact: A
Ease of Implementation: C

At many organizations, managers select staff to serve as “buddies” to help new hires adjust during their first few months on the job. While buddy programs can help onboard staff, there are two drawbacks to these informal programs. Most importantly, an informal buddy is unlikely to have the time or expertise to give new hires the emotional support they need to cope with the pace and intensity of their work. To receive this deeper level of support, new hires need experienced staff with strong coaching skills who can serve as long-term mentors. This type of mentor program requires more investment than a buddy program—but the impact should be greater as well.

Informal Peer Support Not Enough for New Hires

Two Drawbacks of Peer Buddy Programs



Buddy programs are often **decentralized and informal**; **quality of support** new hires receive **varies widely**



Peer **buddies not equipped to provide longer-term emotional support** to new hires to help them cope with workload

Component 1: Allocate 0.2 FTE (HR staff member or educator) to coordinate program

The first component of this practice is to determine if your organization can dedicate the resources necessary to run a new hire mentor program. Use our new hire onboarding audit (excerpt shown here) to identify if your organization can support a formal mentor program. If you cannot meet these requirements, we recommend pursuing a new hire buddy program instead of a formal new hire mentor program.

Assess Available Resources for a Mentor Program

Excerpt from HR’s Guide to New Hire Onboarding, Tool 9

Part 1: Institutional prerequisites for mentorship program

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Can significant HR staff time—approximately 0.2 FTE—be dedicated to owning and overseeing a mentorship program? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Are there enough new hires in the units/departments that would participate in the program that each mentor could be assigned to more than one new hire? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

STOP: Proceed to the next section only if answering “yes” to both questions above. If you answered “no” to either question, your institution is currently not well-positioned to support a mentor program, and we recommend adopting a buddy program instead.

Part 2: Additional considerations for mentorship program

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Is there a sufficient pool of highly motivated, tenured employees who can serve as mentors? (You’ll need at least two to three per department.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

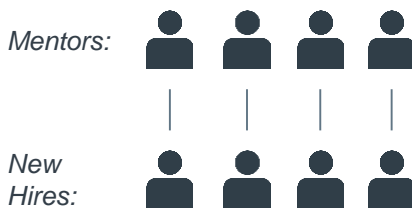
Component 2: Select one mentor for each unit

The second component of this practice is to select experienced staff members to serve as mentors for each unit, rather than assigning one mentor to each new hire. This unit-based approach has two benefits. First, you need fewer mentors, which means you can select just those staff who have a passion for mentoring. Second, since each mentor works with multiple new hires, you create a natural cohort of peers who can discuss their shared experiences.

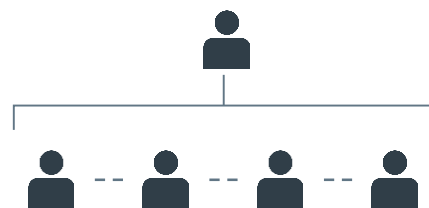
Nurse leaders at UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor, a two-campus hospital in Illinois, realized their new nurses needed additional support beyond that provided through their existing nurse residency program. UnityPoint Health implemented a unit-based mentor program, described in greater detail on the next few pages. A clinical nurse educator spends about 20% of her time coordinating the program, including training and recognizing mentors. Unit-based mentors work with approximately eight new hires for two years.

Unit-Based Mentorships Enable Scalability

Typical Mentor or Buddy Pairing Structure



UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor Professional Mentor Corps Structure



Case in Brief: UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor

- Two-campus, 489-bed hospital located in Peoria, Illinois; part of a 17-hospital regional health system in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois
- Introduced peer mentorship program in 2002 to supplement clinical orientation by helping newly hired nurses and allied health professionals adjust to their roles
- Each unit has one to three mentors, nominated by manager; each mentor works with approximately eight new hires as a cohort for two years
- Mentors and mentees receive up to 12 hours of paid time per year for on-site meetings; each unit receives approximately \$500 annually to fund off-site events, food for meetings, and welcome gifts
- Mentors submit documentation to mentor program leader annually, showing mentorship activities and distribution of funds; if a mentor fails to submit documentation, he or she will not receive funds for the following year
- Mentors meet in person twice a year to share best practices and also receive online training; training time is paid
- Clinical nurse educator spends 20% of time running mentor program

Source: UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor, Peoria, IL; HR Advancement Center interviews and analysis.

Component 3: Give mentors and new hires dedicated time to meet

The third component of this practice is to provide mentors and new hires paid time to meet. Mentors and new hires can spend this time in cohort meetings or one-on-one discussions. At UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor, each new hire has up to 12 hours paid time per year for on-site mentoring activities. Mentors are also paid for this time and have six additional hours of paid training per year. Finally, the organization gives each unit around \$500 (depending on the unit's size) in discretionary funds to support mentoring activities such as the ones shown here.

For organizations with limited resources to support the mentoring program, we recommend prioritizing paid time for mentors and new hires to meet.

The Support for New Hire Support

Mentor Program Support at Methodist | Proctor



Paid Time

12 hours

Annual paid time for mentorship activities for mentors and mentees

Paid time includes:

- On-site group and one-on-one meetings with mentees
- In addition, mentors have six paid hours of continuing education per year



Financial Support

≈\$500

Annual discretionary fund per unit

Discretionary fund includes:

- Food for on-site mentor meetings
- Welcome gifts for new hires
- Speaker costs for mentee meetings
- Education materials for mentor activities/meetings

Component 4: Track mentoring activities and feedback

The fourth component is to track mentoring activities and mentee feedback. This not only instills mentor accountability for meeting with new hires, but also gives leaders insight into general trends in new hire feedback. Mentors submit the form shown here at the end of the year describing their mentoring activities and overall themes from new hire feedback. (Mentors share only broad themes to protect the confidentiality of individual new hires). At UnityPoint Health, mentors do not receive the next year’s discretionary funds until they turn in this completed form.

Leaders at UnityPoint Health wanted to ensure they were appropriately recognizing mentors for their work. They created a points-based system to reward mentors’ efforts. Mentors receive points for each activity they complete and can earn recognition as a bronze, silver, or gold mentor. The incentives corresponding to each level are small annual payouts.

If you choose not to give mentors a stipend, consider non-financial ways of thanking them for their support of new hires (for example, a personal note from senior leaders or public recognition of their role as mentors).

Keeping Track of Mentorship Activities and Feedback
Mentors Must Submit Documentation to Access Next Year’s Funds

Annual Required Mentor Documentation

1. Yearly goals for mentor program on unit
2. Plan for meeting goals
3. Topics discussed during 1:1 mentee meetings
4. Mentee group meeting schedule
5. Unit-based celebrations and special outings
6. Notes and gifts to new hires
7. Retention money distribution
8. Feedback from mentees
9. Mentor communication grid

Giving Mentors Extra Credit for Their Work

Sample Activities Eligible for Mentor Advancement Program Incentive

Activity	Points
Off-site group meeting	3
Develop self-learning module for LMS	3
Facilitate mentor group participation in community service event	2
Attend local conference and present what you learned to mentees	2
Meet with mentee one-on-one; minimum 15 minutes	1

Annual Incentive for Mentor Advancement Program Participants

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Points	10	15	20
Incentives	\$75	\$100	\$125

Source: UnityPoint Health – Methodist | Proctor, Peoria, IL; HR Advancement Center interviews and analysis.

Cross-Calibrated New Hire Feedback

Practice in Brief

HR surveys new hires and their managers about new hire performance and acclimation; the goal is to identify new hires who have significantly different perceptions from their managers' (which could be an early warning sign of future turnover).

Rationale

New hires may feel overwhelmed by their role or worry they aren't meeting expectations, but they may not feel comfortable sharing their concerns with their manager. Managers may consequently assume their new hires are settling in well. By directly comparing new hire and manager perceptions of the new hire's performance, HR can identify instances where new hires feel like they're struggling, but their manager isn't aware. HR can focus retention efforts on these new hires.

Implementation Components

Component 1: Survey New Hires and Their Managers Early in New Hires' Tenure

HR surveys new hires within their first few months at the organization to collect a self-assessment of performance and acclimation. HR conducts a similar survey of new hires' managers to collect manager perceptions of new hires' performance and acclimation.

Component 2: Compare New Hire and Manager Feedback to Identify Discrepancies

HR compares individual new hire responses to their manager's responses to identify new hire-manager pairs whose perceptions are not aligned (as shown by significant gaps between a new hire's self-assessment and their manager's assessment). HR meets with these managers to review survey responses and discuss next steps to decrease retention risk.

Practice Assessment

We recommend this practice for all organizations struggling with first-year turnover. By looking for new hire-manager pairs with the largest discrepancies in perceptions, HR can prioritize intervening with new hires who are at high risk for future turnover.

HR Advancement Center Grades

Practice Impact: A-

Ease of Implementation: B+

In addition to mentors and peers, a new hire's manager can provide valuable emotional support to new hires—but only if the manager knows the new hire is struggling.

The representative scenario shown here is not uncommon: a new hire and his or her manager have different perceptions of the new hire's performance. A new hire may feel like she is failing to keep up with the demands of her new job, but the manager thinks she is performing on par with other new hires.

If the manager knew how the new hire felt, he or she could help reassure the new hire. And if you knew which pairs of new hires and their managers didn't have the same perceptions, you could prioritize working with them to help them get on the same page.

New Hire and Manager Perceptions Not Always Aligned

Representative Scenario



New Hire Perception

"There's so much going on every day. I keep making mistakes, and I'm embarrassed by them."



Manager Perception

"Compared to the last several new hires I've had, this one is getting up to speed quickly! She's ready to fly solo."



Component 1: Survey new hires and their managers early in new hires' tenure

The first component of this practice is to survey new hires and their managers with different sets of related questions. The new hire version of the survey asks new hires about their perceptions of their performance to date and how they're settling into the organization. The manager version of the survey asks managers how they think their new hire is performing. Both surveys should have the four characteristics shown here.

Cross-Checking Manager and New Hire Perceptions

Key Characteristics of a Successful New Hire Cross-Check



Survey has short list of questions to encourage survey completion



Similar questions sent to both manager and new hire to enable side-by-side comparison



Sent early in new hire's tenure to identify warning signs of future turnover



Questions assessed using a six-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to avoid neutral responses

Component 2: Compare new hire and manager feedback to identify discrepancies

The second component of this practice is to compare the survey responses from individual new hires and their managers. In particular, you should look for pairs of new hires and managers who have large differences in their survey responses. HR staff should meet with these managers to review their survey responses and discuss ways to address the differences in the new hire's perceptions.

Comparing Manager and New Hire Perceptions

Three Questions to Answer to Prioritize Intervention



Which new hires have the lowest scores?



Which questions have the lowest scores?



Which new hires have the biggest gaps between their self-assessment and their manager's assessment?

Want more on attracting and retaining the right staff?

Our full publication [*Stop Turnover in the First Three Years: Best Practices for Retaining Millennial Staff*](#) contains additional best practices that will help you retain millennials through their first three years at your organization.

Our framework is informed by our analysis of millennials' engagement survey responses (including open-ended feedback), dozens of interviews with HR leaders across the country, and consultations with engagement experts.

If you're interested in learning more about the full resource, or how we can help you build a millennial-specific retention strategy to supplement your engagement efforts, you can contact us at programinquiries@advisory.com.

Or visit us at: www.advisory.com/research/hr-advancement-center