



Creative Health Care Management
Improving patient care – Children’s National Medical Center
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Leading the industry in sustainable patient care improvements

Children’s National Medical Center: Empowered at the point of care

Although the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial may receive more visitors, the families who have received care at the Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC) will tell you that it is really one of D.C.’s most notable attractions. With its enviable status as one of the best pediatric hospitals in the United States, the healing and lifesaving patient care at CNMC in Washington D.C. has helped thousands of families and their youngest members get through some very difficult times.

It’s a privilege taken very seriously by staff members at all levels of CNMC. “We provide a level of pediatric care that is unrivaled in the Washington metropolitan area,” said Edwin K. Zechman Jr., president and CEO of CNMC. This preeminent care has been noted by magazines such as *U.S. News* and *World Report* in their health care ranking report, as well as by *Child* magazine and other media.

With the core of its exemplary services provided through professional nursing practice and the important nurse-patient-family relationship, CNMC’s Mourine Evans has a big job. As the director of nursing staff development at CNMC, she is responsible and accountable for nursing competencies and education development. Evans has spent her six years with CNMC building highly effective, interdependent relationships among the various members of the health care team – as well as with patients and families. During that time she has engaged CHCM for consultation and education services to help her achieve her objectives.

A changed life

“In the early 1980s, I was a nurse manager with another organization,” said Evans. “My vice president at the time knew that nurse managers needed to be leading in a different kind of way.”



“The Vice President suggested that I attend a Creative Health Care Management (CHCM) course called Leading an Empowered Organization. I must say, it changed my life and had an amazing impact on the way I lead my teams.” Evans explained. “I continue to refer to the manual on a regular basis.”

Leading an Empowered Organization or LEO, is a three-day program designed to develop and nurture effective leaders and leadership teams. Nurse leaders are expected to create and maintain healthy work environments and high quality services that will ultimately result in high customer and staff satisfaction. “Nurse managers are often in difficult positions, feeling unsupported from others in the organization. Yet nurse managers truly impact the lives of patients and families,” added Evans. “With LEO, you understand that you are empowered at the point of care in your relationships with the patient and with your staff. Before LEO, I was always waiting to get the okay for things that I knew made sense or would affect patients, families or staff.”

Challenges and struggles

Evans joined the staff of CNMC as an administrative manager. Her first months in her new job were difficult at best. Sixty percent of the nurses working at CNMC were agency employees and the medical center was struggling with an acute shortage of nursing professionals. Morale was low; turnover was high.

To address nurse retention and recruitment, Evans and her colleagues established a strategic initiative to institute as many tactics as possible to make nursing attractive at CNMC. These tactics went beyond typical drivers like pay, benefits and work flexibility.

Colleen Person, CHCM vice president, who has worked with Children’s for several years, comments about their achievements. “CNMC has done a phenomenal job on its work environment, establishing pride in individual work with patients and their families, along with the development of critical thinking to enhance the professional identity of nurses.”

“We also implemented *Reigniting the Spirit of Caring* for all nurses across the organization,” said Evans. “It’s another great CHCM program that gives participants a renewed sense of why they wanted to be nurses in the first place. They appreciate the new perspectives and the collaboration with their colleagues. The insights gained from the program enabled our nurses to deepen their knowledge about caring for themselves and team members, which then gets passed on through exemplary care for the patients and their families.”



The quest to improve patient care

The heart of CNMC's expertise lies not only in meeting the special needs of sick children, but in their ability to comfort and inform the children's often overwhelmed and distraught families as well. This requires caregivers who have clinical expertise, as well as a strong commitment to purpose.

"Patient- and family-centered care is our vision and we are working hard to give a voice to even our youngest patients and their families," said Evans. "Our patient satisfaction surveys and nursing retention rates have improved. These measures have given us the confidence to strive for Magnet status from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

"Evans' work at Children's has laid the foundation for professional practice development with the medical center's leadership team and the nursing staff," said Person. "The medical center implemented a principle-based nursing care delivery model with the leadership team and the unit-based practice councils working together. The council's role is to plan, design, implement and continuously improve the model – which is truly about empowering nurses to make those decisions that directly affect patient care at the nursing unit level."

"Improvements require ongoing work and discipline. Other managers – and I, too – continually refer back to the work from *Reigniting the Spirit of Care* around how we prepare ourselves to come to work and how we focus our attention at work," said Evans. "We also continue to use the LEO book as a manual that we reference when we encounter new challenges, for instance, ways to develop positive discipline. CHCM has provided us with invaluable guidance and tools to help overcome the challenges that we face on a daily basis. We're confident we are headed in the right direction, and that our continued hard work and dedication to the medical center will continually improve the care we give our patients."