THE QUEST FOR PERSON-CENTERED CARE:
3 WAYS HR PROCESSES SUPPORT PLANETREE DESIGNATION
Bringing that concept to life depends on many factors, but one of the most important is staffing healthcare organizations with employees who value person-centered care. Finding, hiring, and retaining staff that embody Planetree principles often requires a shift in organizational culture and operations. However, the payoff in terms of increased healthcare customer and employee satisfaction is worth the effort.
“Planetree principles make the difference between good and great service. The key is to stick to the person-centered culture and ensure that employees behave in ways that are consistent with that culture.”

Kerry Lynn Barrett  
VP Human Resources  
North Westchester Hospital Center

Planetree provides a framework to assess everything healthcare organizations do to ensure each process is focused around the patient and resident experience.

The designation journey has two major components:

Self-assessment. Planetree self-assessments include between 60 and 66 designation criteria. One of the criteria focuses on HR systems and ensures that these systems reflect a person-centered philosophy and that staff feel connected to their work. Important HR processes include job descriptions, interviewing techniques, and behavioral standards.

Planetree site visit. During a site visit, the Planetree assessors engage in focus groups with staff at all levels, patients and residents, and family members. As a part of these meetings, they look for consistency between information provided in the self-assessment and the responses from focus group participants. From an HR perspective, the Planetree assessors examine all aspects of the candidate and employee experience, from onboarding and orientation to coaching and retreat processes.

Since employees are such a central part of the patient and resident experience, Planetree designation is also concerned with how organizations care for caregivers. It’s important that employees feel supported and empowered to care for patients and residents in the best way possible. As noted by Christy Davies, Planetree Designation Coordinator, “Every employee in an organization is a caregiver and happy employees make happy patients and residents.”

Based on conversations with several organizations that are Planetree Designated® Patient-Centered Care Hospitals, we found three ways that HR processes can be structured to promote person-centered care.
Hiring employees who fit the Planetree culture can lead to greater employee satisfaction and lower turnover. At Kadlec Medical Center in Richmond, Washington, they feel that staff enthusiasm about the Planetree culture leads to positive patient experiences. “When we recruit at national educational conferences, we talk about Planetree,” said Kris Gauntt, Manager of Recruitment. “It’s incredible how much excitement that creates at the booth. There are so many people who feel passionate about patient-centered care.” Kadlec Medical Center also evaluates candidates on aptitude and attitude. With thorough screening processes that include behavioral assessments, Kadlec’s HR team only presents the top candidates to hiring managers. “We feel it’s better to wait and hire someone who is a good fit, rather than make a hire for the sake of filling a position,” said Kristin Fox, Director of Human Resources.

Here are five ways that Planetree Designated organizations ensure that they find employees who have a passion for person-centered care:

1. Behavioral Assessments
A pre-interview assessment can help evaluate factors such as energy, enthusiasm, and a willingness to work different shifts. Fauquier Health in Warrenton, Virginia, has found behavioral assessments to be very useful because the results include a list of interview questions that explore different scenarios and help determine cultural fit. Kadlec Medical Center has also discovered that assessment results are a good predictor of longevity of employment with the organization. The organization tracks turnover percentages as part of its Pursuit of Excellence Board, and the data is very positive and trends better than national and state averages.

2. Behavioral-Based Interviews
Planetree organizations take a holistic view of applicants, not just their clinical skills. They are interested in learning about candidates’ values and how they will fit into the organizational culture. Managers and staff are trained to ask questions that focus on issues like motivation and cultural fit. Laura Welsh, Director of HR and Staff Development at Fauquier Health, noted, “We include a specific interview question focused on how the candidate sees him or herself fitting into the Planetree culture.”
About Our Contributors
Continued

Kadlec Regional Medical Center
• A not-for-profit medical center in Richland, Washington
• Number of beds: 249
• 292 active medical staff

Planetree
• Planetree advocates for patients and residents, provides solutions for healthcare organizations, and sets the standard for excellence in patient-centered care. The Planetree network is a global community of acute care hospitals, continuing care communities, and outpatient clinics transforming healthcare by considering every aspect of care from the perspective of their patients and residents, and reconnecting staff to their passion for caring for others.

3. Job Shadowing
At Kadlec Medical Center, some departments offer job shadowing so candidates can see firsthand how important the patient experience is to the organization. Job shadowing also gives managers and peers an opportunity to observe how candidates interact with patients and families.

4. Peer Interviews
Teams that have collegial relationships tend to work well together. As a result, peer interviews are an important way to give employees a voice in deciding who new team members will be. “Every team is a little bit different,” said Katy Reeves, Vice President Human Resources at Fauquier Health. “As a result, the staff develops interview guides that are unique to each unit and department’s needs.”

5. Reference Checks
A few years ago, Kadlec Medical Center added a question to its reference checks: Would you trust this person to care for one of your loved ones? Gauntt and Fox feel that the answer to this question is the key to finding people who fit the Planetree culture because it brings a more personal element into the reference checking process.

Reference assessment software can also provide healthcare organizations with a more accurate picture of the candidates they’re considering by evaluating reference responses with core behavioral competencies, such as integrity and customer focus. This automated solution provides a more structured reference checking process, while allowing healthcare organizations to input customized questions that they feel are important to their organization.
2. Start Employees off on the Right Foot with Onboarding and Orientation

Planetree organizations realize that supporting and empowering caregivers is one of the best ways to ensure person-centered care. This starts from the first day on the job, with onboarding and orientation.

**Planetree Designated organizations described two practices that have worked well for them:**

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<th>Focus the orientation on person-centered values and the employee experience, not administrative paperwork.</th>
<th>Conduct a Planetree retreat.</th>
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Onboarding shouldn’t be a paperwork marathon. Shore Medical Center in Somers Point, New Jersey, has tried to simplify the administrative aspect of onboarding as much as possible. Employees receive forms electronically through an applicant tracking system so that they can fill them out at home prior to their first day.

In addition, the HR team has created a new role called the onboarding liaison. “In the past, employee orientation had a lot of touch points, ranging from drug testing and physicals to paperwork,” said Tom Hendrixson, Administrative Director of Human Resources & Organizational Development. “It wasn’t as well-coordinated as it could be for employees. With the onboarding liaisons, now there is a single person who contacts new hires for everything and greets them on their first day.”

North Westchester Hospital Center in Mt. Kisco, New York also takes a personalized approach to new employee orientation. A welcome card is sent to every new employee, and the orientation meeting is kicked off by the President and Vice President of HR. New hires have afternoon tea with staff and receive individualized orientation plans.

Through full-day Planetree retreats, new employees learn more about patient-centered care, as well as about the 10 components of Planetree and how to incorporate them into their daily work. Many organizations invite all staff, including doctors, volunteers, and other employees to participate.

Some organizations have staff attend the retreat immediately after hire, while others invite new employees to a retreat within 30 to 90 days of hire. At Kadlec Medical Center, employees break into subgroups to brainstorm ways to enhance the patient experience. One employee, for example, came up with the idea to fold pediatric blankets into animal shapes. Shore Medical Center’s retreat, called the Spirit of Shore, is held in a spa-like atmosphere, which conveys the ideal patient experience. One employee, for example, came up with the idea to fold pediatric blankets into animal shapes. Shore Medical Center’s retreat, called the Spirit of Shore, is held in a spa-like atmosphere, which conveys the ideal patient experience. One employee, for example, came up with the idea to fold pediatric blankets into animal shapes. Shore Medical Center’s retreat, called the Spirit of Shore, is held in a spa-like atmosphere, which conveys the ideal patient experience. One employee, for example, came up with the idea to fold pediatric blankets into animal shapes.
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Laura Welsh
Director of HR and Staff Development
Fauquier Health

3. Reinforce Patient-Centered Care through Performance Feedback and Continuous Learning

With performance feedback, organizations can praise employees for patient-centered behaviors and identify opportunities for improvement. It’s common for designated hospitals to incorporate Planetree principles into employee evaluations. “Fauquier’s core values inform employees about what is important and how to embody Planetree principles in their work. Core values are part of every evaluation, so everyone is held to the same standards and expectations,” said Laura Welsh.

Other ways that Planetree Designated organizations reinforce the importance of person-centered care include:

Self-evaluations and peer reviews. As part of the performance management process, employees may be asked to complete a self-assessment. Many organizations also require that staff ask a peer to review their performance. The goal of these evaluations is to identify employees’ strengths and areas for improvement.

Real-time feedback. Kadlec Medical Center is evolving from an annual performance evaluation model to real-time feedback. “We recently started a pilot where managers focus on teaching moments and use those to coach employees on their performance. The goal is to transform managers into teachers who will help employees become the best they can be,” said Fox. The pilot has improved the relationship between managers and employees. Each quarter, managers meet with HR and reflect on the interactions they’ve had with each employee.

To ensure person-centered performance initiatives are achieved, healthcare organizations should consider implementing a performance management system. The accessibility of a centralized online performance management system encourages more real time employee and leadership feedback. This allows managers to align employee goals to person-centered care initiatives and track those goals electronically throughout the year to be evaluated during the performance appraisal process. A performance management system also makes it more feasible for employees to complete self-assessments, peer reviews, and provide electronic forms that are easy to use and route to supervisors.
When employee objectives are not simply mandated by the management team, workers are more likely to strive to meet them.

A central tenet of Planetree Designated organizations is continuous process improvement. To engage employees in this process, organizations strive to provide opportunities for ongoing learning.

Here are three examples of how person-centered care is reinforced through learning activities:

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<th>Employee Huddles</th>
<th>Preceptors</th>
<th>Planetree Committees</th>
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<td>At Fauquier Health, each day every unit has a Huddle (in the ER, they are called Cuddles) for ten to fifteen minutes. “Each meeting has a topic of the day, which often focuses on the patient experience. At the end of the Huddle, employees are asked to think about how they can apply the day’s topic to their work,” said Lisa Spitzer, Planetree Program Manager.</td>
<td>For the first 90 days, employees at Shore Medical Center have a preceptor who works with them on skills and behaviors. Preceptors are trained through workshops to promote positive behaviors and to deal with negative behaviors. Shore Medical Center also tracks employee learning through a learning management and competency management system, making it easier to report on compliance, deliver learning content, and track employee completions.</td>
<td>Both North Westchester Hospital Center and Shore Medical Center have Planetree Committees that enable employees to focus on how to promote different components of the Planetree model within the organization.</td>
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Planetree, Person-Centered Care, and Long-Term Care Communities

Many of the person-centered care principles that apply to hospitals also apply to long-term care. However, there are some distinctive aspects of long-term care that are important to acknowledge. For example, the consistency of staff in long-term care communities is critical. When people have cognitive impairments, familiar caregivers can decrease their anxiety. “In long-term care, relationships are as important as clinical skills,” noted Christy Davies, Planetree Designation Coordinator. As a result, it’s essential to hire employees who are committed to developing relationships with residents. It’s also crucial to find people who are a good cultural fit, since they will be less likely to leave the organization.

Some Planetree Designated long-term care communities include residents in their hiring and orientation processes. In addition to hiring, residents should have a voice in employee evaluations. Continuing education standards are another key consideration when it comes to resident-centered care in long-term care. Staff members need to stay current on elder issues and resident experience issues. “In long-term care, resident-centered care is so important, but we need to strike a balance,” said Davies. “We want consistency with the staff, but not complacency. Employees must be given opportunities to keep their skills fresh.”

In addition to continuous learning, Planetree Designated organizations use a variety of programs to recognize employees for engaging in person-centered care:

Peer-to-Peer Recognition. Many Planetree hospitals have programs that enable employees to recognize their peers for providing patient-centered care. This is often done through recognition cards. North Westchester Hospital Center uses “Pay It Forward” cards. These cards entitle recipients to a free coffee or treat, but they also include a second card that the recipient can use to recognize one of their peers for outstanding patient-centered work. At Fauquier Health, after an employee receives a certain number of Planetree recognition cards, he or she can bring them to HR and trade them in for a gift card. Besides recognition cards, employees at Kadlec Medical Center nominate their peers for the Planetree Caregiver Award and Physician Award. Nominees attend the annual Planetree conference.

Patient Recognition. Several organizations have formal programs where patients can recognize employees for outstanding care. With Fauquier Health’s “Grateful Patient” program, caregivers are given a pin to acknowledge positive patient feedback.

Leadership Recognition. At Shore Medical Center, the leadership team makes rounds and gathers patient input. This is conveyed back to employees through feedback cards or in person.
Conclusion

Planetree Designated healthcare organizations use creative approaches in all aspects of their operations to guarantee they provide person-centered care. Given the central role that staff plays in the patient and resident experience, it makes sense that these innovations extend to HR practices. Planetree Designated organizations intervene at the beginning of the employee lifecycle to ensure that they hire the right staff and caregivers and then strive to provide them with meaningful orientation experiences. Planetree organizations also reinforce the Planetree culture of person-centered care through performance feedback, continuous learning, and employee recognition. These best practices around talent management should lead to happier healthcare employees and happier healthcare customers.

Want to know more about how HR influences person-centered care? Download our white paper with the results from the Planetree and HealthcareSource HR Influence Survey.

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