

Recruiting and Retaining a Patient-Centered Workforce

Why Do It?

The primary care home model of care emphasizes different skill sets than traditional primary care and may require your staff to work quite differently than how they were trained. Clinic leaders can facilitate the transition to team-based care by supporting existing staff, being transparent about expectations and adapting hiring strategies to emphasize core competencies of the PCPCH model. Be sure to also check out the tip sheets on *Team Based Care* and *Leadership*.

Where to Start

1. Provide support and training for your existing employees. This will likely require periods of time when the clinic is closed or not maximizing the number of patient visits. Use these closures to signal that you value your employees and are making an investment in them. Focus early trainings on the PCPCH model, core concepts such as Care Coordination and Behavioral Health Integration, and team-building (see the related tip sheets). Over time, you may shift from clinic-wide trainings on universal concepts to trainings for specific employees, which can be accomplished through webinars and job shadowing at other PCPCH clinics. The [Institute website](#) offers resources and webinars on [Clinician and Organizational Vitality](#).

2. Expect some turnover. The transition to PCPCH is a tremendous opportunity for your staff to help transform the clinic, but it is also a period of rapid change that can leave people exhausted or feeling they no longer fit in the organization. It is not uncommon for clinics to experience a wave of turnover. Do what you can to support your staff, but recognize that some turnover will be inevitable and is not a sign of failure. When turnover happens, discuss with your care teams what opportunities there are to make changes in workflows, team structures or roles.

3. Hire strategically. With turnover comes an opportunity to emphasize the skills and competencies that are useful for working in a medical home. Revise your recruitment process to emphasize flexibility, strong communication, and desire to work in a team. Hire for these attributes rather than specific clinical skills or experience. When possible, let your teams lead the hiring process for new members to ensure compatibility and promote a sense of shared accountability for the team's performance.

“Instead of looking at titles, look at commitment, and finding your staff members who are really committed to making change and willing to do the work and learn. If they want to learn and grow, they will drive through it. That initiative...having people that really want to do the work.”

PCPCH tip sheets were developed from the reported experiences of recognized PCPCH's, by a Portland State University research team under contract with the Oregon Health Authority, 2016. These recommendations are not part of the official OHA technical assistance guide and are not a guarantee of program recognition. Access this Tip Sheet and other resources: <http://www.pcpcci.org/search/resources>.

4. Update your orientation and professional development processes. Don't forget that your new employees will not have benefited from the early training you provided on general PCPCH concepts. If possible, build these into your new employee orientation as well as providing ongoing refreshers on core concepts for all staff. Over time, empower your staff at all levels of the clinic by encouraging them to attend trainings and then bring back what they learned to share with the rest of the staff.

5. Evaluate and appreciate. With the focus on data and performance metrics in the PCPCH model, it can be easy to lose sight of employee evaluations. Make sure your employees receive feedback on what they are doing well and where they can improve. Don't forget to celebrate successes!

Tips for Recruiting and Retaining a Patient-Centered Workforce

- ❖ Incorporating new technology can be a significant point of tension for existing employees. **Acknowledge the tension** and provide additional support when specific employees need it.
- ❖ Team-based care is characterized by flatter organizational structures. **Use team-building exercises and physical co-location** to get providers and staff comfortable communicating across professional silos (see the tip sheet on *Team Based Care*).
- ❖ **Make it safe.** If your providers are not salaried, consider **freezing compensation** during the transition to PCPCH to reduce concerns about loss of income.
- ❖ **Listen in earnest.** After implementing substantial changes, ask for feedback. If employees are complaining about a change, try to engage them in finding a solution (see the tip sheet on *Quality Improvement*).
- ❖ **Watch for change fatigue.** If staff who were initially enthusiastic are becoming apathetic or disengaged, slow down. Clearly communicate why a change is happening, and not just how it needs to happen. Make sure you **close the loop** on past change processes. Report back on results, and let people know when a change is finished or finalized (see the tip sheet on *Culture and Change Management*).