

6th Annual ONL NJ Awards: Achievements of the Work of Hospital-based Nursing Workplace Environments and Staffing Councils (NWESC)

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Hospitals across New Jersey are raising the bar when it comes to creating supportive, thriving work environment. A recent state-wide research study in New Jersey found that nurse NWESC hospitals reported significantly healthier work environments compared to nurses at hospitals without NWESC when controlling for Magnet®, job role, and degree and Magnet® hospitals with NWESC have the healthiest work environments. The additive effect of NWESC on the health of the work environment highlights the importance that NWESC provides as the foundational infrastructure and a viable alternative to staffing ratio legislation (JONA, 2022).

The Organization of Nurse Leaders of New Jersey (ONL NJ) recently celebrated these achievements of the NWESC healthy work environment projects at its 6th Annual Statewide ONL NJ NWESC Retreat on October 30, 2025. This event brought together hospitals within the 49 NWESC hospitals in NJ, highlighting the outstanding evidenced-based contributions to improving workplace culture and nurse satisfaction based on the AACN healthy work environment pillars (AACN, 2016).

Appropriate Staffing - Transforming Staffing Strategy Through Collaborative Nursing Leadership (AHS - Overlook Medical Center). Led a collaborative, standardized staffing and budget planning initiative that strengthened nursing's financial stewardship, improved equitable staffing across all shifts, reduced reliance on travel, nurses, and earned exemplary recognition during OMC's 2025

Magnet® Site Visit.

Authentic Leadership - A Celebration of Compassionate Leadership and Resilience Empowering Nurses Through Restorative Environments (Saint Peter's University Hospital). The Serenity Space Contest promoted nursing staff resilience and well-being by engaging departments in creating personalized, restorative spaces during Nurses Week, resulting in improved morale, stress reduction, and a sustainable culture of self-care supported by leadership investment.

Effective Communication - Decentralizing to Collaborate: Embedding Area-based Pharmacy Roles to Enhance Interdisciplinary Care (AHS - Morristown Medical Center). The Area-based Pharmacy model embedded pharmacists and technicians directly into inpatient units, improving interdisciplinary collaboration, medication timeliness, discharge efficiency, and staff satisfaction while operationalizing AACN's True Collaboration standard.

Meaningful Recognition- The Power of Peers: A Sustainable Celebration of Nursing Staff (University Hospital). Peer-led meaningful recognition employee of the month program fostered a culture of kindness and appreciation aligned with AACN standards, resulting in higher staff engagement, improved retention, and measurable gains in quality and safety outcomes across multiple nursing units.

Skilled Communication - Nursing Preceptor Guide for Creating a Positive Learning Environment (Cooper University Health Care). The Nursing Excellence Council partnered with medical

school and education leaders to address workplace incivility by developing and implementing a Nurse Preceptor Guide that standardizes positive, collaborative behaviors, resulting in improved nurse engagement, reduce turnover, and enhanced learner satisfaction while supporting AACN's HWE standards.

True Collaboration - OR Certification Support: A Collaborative Initiative to Advance Perioperative Nursing Excellence (AHS - CentraState Medical Center). The "CNOR Take 2 Program" removed financial and educational barriers through leadership support and collaborative study group, resulting in a 100% certification pass rate among participants and nearly doubling CNOR-certified perioperative nurses while strengthening team engagement and patient safety excellence.

Resilience - Code Lavender: Supporting Emotional Resilience in Healthcare (University Hospital). Code Lavender is a multidisciplinary, 24/7 rapid-response program that supports nurses during acute stress and trauma, strengthening resilience, improving HWE outcomes, reducing turnover, and fostering a culture of psychological safety and caregiver well-being.

Questions about the work of ONL NJ and Nursing Workplace Environment and Staffing Councils (NWESC), contact Taniesha Knight, Program Coordinator, ONL NJ at TKnight@onlnj.org ■

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