

**Self-Reported Changes in Nurse Manager
Proficiency
Resulting From Participation in The Rising Star
Leadership Program**

-Summary of Findings-

Marion Burns Tuck, PhD, RN, CNAA,BC, FACHE

AnnMarie Papa, MSN, RN, CEN, CNA,BC, FAEN

The Rising Star Leadership Program

After conducting surveys and focus groups across Pennsylvania, the PA State Nurses Association identified ongoing leadership training as a critical need for nurse managers. In collaboration with The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Nursing Schools Association, a task force was formed to evaluate survey and focus group findings and the concept for The Rising Star Leadership Program was developed.

A call for nominations to attend the program was sent out in late August 2006 to chief nursing officers of all Pennsylvania hospitals, long-term care facilities and home health agencies. Managers were required to have at least two years of management experience and have written endorsement from their chief nursing executive. Response was significant and the selection process was competitive for the 40 available slots. Program content was based on findings from the original surveys and focus groups and from information collected from the task force.

The three day program was held on November 16-17, 2006 and on March 23, 2007 in Hershey. Nationally recognized speakers were chosen to conduct the sessions. The goals of The Rising Star Leadership Program were to “ improve the quality of their individual work environments and units; advocate for healthy employee lifestyles; become vigilant about patient safety; and develop oneself and develop others.”

The Project

The investigators wished to measure any change that occurred as a result of participation in the three day development program. Since the topics covered were diverse, no tools were found that could measure the variety of content. Consequently, a tool was created that asked managers to rate on a five-point Likert scale his/her proficiency on the eight major topics of focus contained in the program: promoting a safe environment for patients, promoting a safe environment for staff, knowledge of health labor law, role modeling skill, decision making, communication skill, use of evidence-based practice, and negotiation skill. The same tool was administered three times – on the first day at the beginning of the program (test #1), at the conclusion of the second day (test #2) and at the start of the follow-up session four months later (test #3). The purpose of the study was explained by one of the investigators to program participants as well as the fact that participation was entirely voluntary. All forty attendees elected to participate. A token gift (Starbucks gift certificate) was given to each participant after the completed tools were handed to

the investigator. Data were analyzed by Kathy Gray–Siracusa PhD, RN, MBA from Villanova University. A grant for \$1900 to help defray research expenses was requested from SEPONL and approved.

Findings

Demographics

The mean number of years that participants were RN's was 21.3 years. On the average, they were managers for 6 years and had 63 full time equivalents (FTEs) reporting to them.

Forty attendees listed a bachelor degree as their highest educational level and fourteen had a master's degree. Three participants had an associate degree and three had a diploma as the highest attained education.

Proficiency Self Assessments

Mean self assessment scores on all eight topics increased from test #1 to test#2. This change in average scores was significant ($p<0.05$). A comparison of scores gathered four months later (test #3) to those collected immediately after the program (test #2) also showed significantly ($p<0.05$) higher self proficiencies in all eight measured areas. Scores obtained before the program (test #1) significantly increased ($p<0.05$) in all areas when measured at the four month follow-up session (test#3).

Relationship Between Demographics and Self Assessment

There were no significant relationships between the number of years a participant was an RN and his/her self assessment of proficiency on any item. This was consistent for each of the three testing periods.

There were no significant relationships between years experience as a nurse manager and his/her self proficiency at the time of initial assessment (test #1) or at the four month follow-up session (test #3). There was, however, one significant correlation between one assessed skill and manager experience at the conclusion of the program on day two (test #2). Nurse managers with longer tenure rated themselves as significantly more proficient in providing a safe environment for their workers.

There were no significant correlations between skill assessments and number of FTE's reporting to each manager on the initial assessment (test #1) or immediately after the second day (test #2). There was a significant negative correlation between the skill assessment for a safe work environment and the number of FTE's at the four month testing period (test #3). The fewer

FTE's supervised the more proficient the manager assessed themselves on creating a safe work environment.

Conclusion

Comparison of survey findings taken before, immediately following and four months after The Rising Star Leadership Program demonstrated increased levels of self reported proficiency in the eight areas of focus in the program. While there are acknowledged limitations to this investigation, it does support the value of the program for attendees and endorses the importance of nursing manager development.

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