

REVIVING THE RETENTION RATE: THE CASE FOR FRONTLINE WORKER SUPPORT

How Advocate Health Care created their Teammate Success Coaching Program, an inclusive employment initiative prioritizing the health and wellness of frontline teammates through holistic resource support and mentorship.

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FOLLOW THE NUMBERS

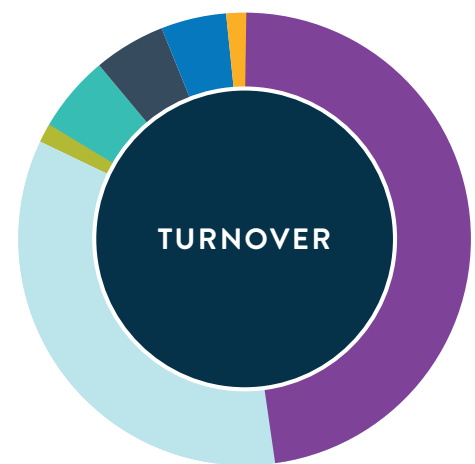
In 2021, a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, Advocate Health Care noticed a troubling trend: After experiencing unprecedented patient volumes, staff turnover was on the rise. This wasn't just impacting their medical staff; retention rates among support staff were significantly dropping. If they didn't find a way to respond, the issue would continue to grow.

To dig deeper, leadership examined the data around voluntary turnover in 2021 and found that nearly half of responses cited “personal reasons” for why they were leaving. Faced with this data, Human Resources teams began having more intentional conversations with staff – asking frontline managers if they were hearing about personal challenges their teammates were facing.

Stories began to pour in about teammates struggling to find transportation, childcare, enough food for their family, and stable housing. Recently, a staff member was consistently arriving late to work, only for her manager to learn that she had experienced a house fire and didn't have permanent housing. Stories like hers made them wonder: How many other teammates have experiences like these? And most importantly, how can we get ahead of it in areas where we can help and possibly be the difference between someone working here tomorrow vs. losing their job today?

At the time, some Advocate sites experienced turnover as high as 75% for certain roles – which meant they were losing a majority of support staff within their first year. This wasn't just a minor inconvenience. These employees occupied roles in food and nutrition, patient transport, and environmental services. If they didn't have these roles in place to ensure patient rooms were clean or rooms could be turned over when a patient was admitted from the emergency room, it impacted Advocate's ability to serve the community. **The question wasn't if they should address the issue, but how.**

2021 AAH VOLUNTARY TURNOVER



- Personal Reasons - 554
- Other Employment - 391
- Work Environment - 17
- COVID-19 - 62
- External Agency - 59
- LOA Failure to Return - 53
- Non-Compliance - 17

FIND A SOLUTION

At the time, Michele Smith was the newly appointed Enterprise Director of Workforce Development Strategy. In her role, Smith focused on creating career pathways and pipeline programs for their internal teams, as well as for people that lived in the communities Advocate served. While she was relatively new to healthcare, she had spent 10+ years in higher education, which gave her a strong background in how to support individuals in new environments.

In education, it was common for universities to have advisors walk alongside students, guiding them on their career trajectory or providing counsel when life got in the way. Universities were also data-driven and collected metrics around student retention. As Smith brainstormed with the Workforce Development Manager, she couldn't help but think about how the idea of an advisor could apply to healthcare. While universities were trying to impact student retention, she was trying to impact retention too – but in her case, it was among hospital staff. Smith wondered if a similar approach could work. If they wanted to promote teammate success, could they create Success Coaches to guide employees along their career journeys?

To see if the idea had legs, Smith brought it to her Human Resources Business Partners. They liked the concept and helped the Workforce Development Manager come up with the vision for the Teammate Success Coaching Program (TMSC), where they could provide coaching alongside identified resource needs. Dayla Randolph, the Senior Vice President of Talent and Culture, recognized the need immediately. She had spoken with senior leaders in Human Resources and other units across the organization who were feeling similar pain and understood the acute need.

To ensure they could get the resources to pilot the program, there was one other key thing they needed to figure out: How to fund it. Like many health systems, Advocate didn't have unlimited funds, so Smith knew that requesting any new funding would face significant obstacles. Smith and the Workforce Development Manager wanted to demonstrate the return on investment for the hospital, so they decided the best way to sell TMSC would be to repurpose dollars in their existing budget. To do so, they estimated how much it would cost to cover staff and resource support for the pilot. After getting Randolph's approval, they presented their vision for the program to the Chief Human Resources Officer. It was approved, and they were off to the races.

Now, Smith just needed to build the program. But to do that, she would need to build her team first.

“ We focus on a patient's whole person, including social drivers of health. So why not take a similar model with our own teammates that would allow us to address the whole person and keep them employed? This would not only help our organization but the community at large.

DAYLA RANDOLPH
Senior Vice President of Talent & Culture

HIRE THE RIGHT TEAM

When Smith got the greenlight to hire the pilot team, she knew exactly who she wanted to bring on to oversee the program – Bridgett Beene. Smith worked with Beene at Joliet Junior College, where Beene was serving as the Director of Career Services, and believed she had the perfect skillset to build the program.

Like Smith, Beene was familiar with retention tactics at the collegiate level. She worked closely with advisors to ensure students were able to graduate on time and meet their goals. It involved a lot of outreach, as well as connecting students to resources and support. When Beene described her work in education, she said, “If they were struggling with their classes, we’d connect them to tutoring. If they felt like they couldn’t pay their tuition, we’d connect them to scholarships or financial aid. If they were feeling down or sad, we’d connect them to counselors. But we also had partnerships with our instructors, so if a student missed a class or was failing, the instructors would reach out to the advisors and say, ‘Hey, can you follow up with this student? They aren’t doing well,’ and the advisors intervened. The reason I had a strong vision for the program is because the work we wanted to do with Success Coaching at Advocate was similar.”

Beene was initially hired to oversee several workforce development initiatives at Advocate, but ultimately spent most of her time working closely with Advocate’s then-Workforce Development Manager to get the Teammate Success Coaching Program off the ground. Together, they answered questions like what supports they should start with, how they would track success, and what site they should select for the pilot. Key to Beene’s vision was being able to get ahead of whatever hurdles their teammates were facing, and providing resources before the challenge became a true obstacle. If teammates couldn’t get to work, she wanted to be able to call a ride share service or get them a bus pass. If they were struggling to find childcare, she wanted to be able to connect them with a childcare provider. She also wanted to build in extensive outreach to ensure teammates had the resources they needed. She knew that if she followed that model, it would work, just like it did in higher education.

To achieve this, Beene set out to hire two Success Coaches and determine where to pilot the program. Advocate used turnover and retention data to identify where to pilot the program. They focused on hospitals and departments with vulnerable talent populations and high turnover rates.

Because a large part of the Success Coach’s role would be face-to-face meetings onsite, Beene knew she had to be intentional about finding Success Coach candidates with strong interpersonal skills who were caring, had a high level of empathy, and felt passionate about the work they were doing. She understood the Success Coach could be a trusted mentor, but only if they built authentic relationships with teammates.

With a background in workforce development, higher education, and GED programs, Ramien Manson became Advocate’s first Success Coach. Not only was he deeply familiar with the demographic, but Manson had done career development work before. He was used to providing support and guidance to adults who were trying to navigate their next steps. Most importantly, he was able to see teammates as people overcoming very human obstacles, and often rooted in systemic inequity. He understood that every teammate was different, just as every situation was different. He could treat each instance like it was a new experience and provide the holistic, individual coaching he knew they needed.



BUILD THE PROGRAM

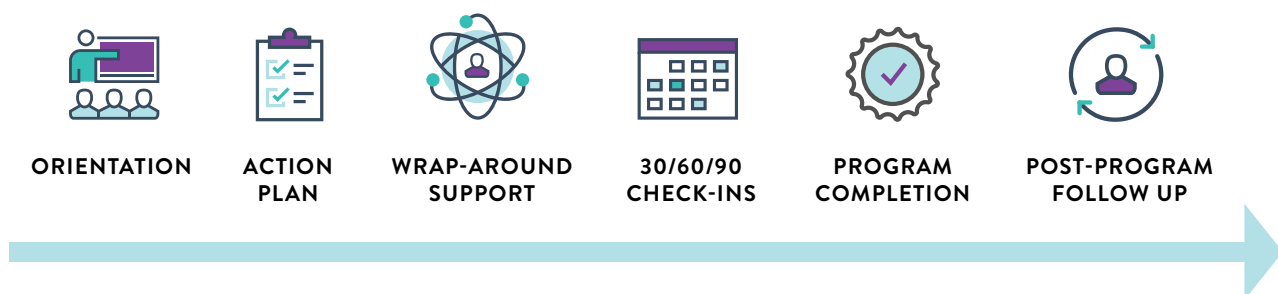
As the team began to build the framework for the program, they considered their conversations with leaders who had a deep understanding of staff experiences. In addition to housing, they knew transportation, childcare, and food security were big challenges, so they wanted to be able to focus on those supports first.

There was a strong desire for career development as well, so they wanted to ensure the program went beyond providing immediate resources when teammates were in crisis or had an acute need. They wanted to ensure that Advocate wasn't just seen as a job, but a place where teammates saw a pathway to a long-term, fulfilling career. They landed on a 90-day program, where support staff would be matched with a Success Coach who would walk alongside them for their first three months on the job.

If teammates were struggling with food, the Success Coach would provide grocery gift certificates, cafeteria vouchers, and bags of fresh produce. Success Coaches would also provide bus passes, gas cards, parking passes, or Lyft rides to and from work if teammates needed temporary assistance with transportation. If teammates needed clothing, they would provide vouchers for Goodwill, or if their childcare fell through, they'd connect them to KinderCare for emergency back-up care. All of this would be on top of Advocate's other internal resources including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which was already offered to staff and included services around mental health, financial assistance, and legal aid. The goal was to develop trust and provide support, so if teammates bumped into barriers early in their tenure with Advocate, their Success Coach could intervene to maximize their chances of staying on the job.

While the resource supports would be critical, they understood that it wasn't just about having resources available. They knew teammates may be hesitant to accept help, so they needed to design a program that would get them onboard early. To do so, they created an intentional, six-part program that would start on someone's first day on the job.

Here's what it looked like:



“The Success Coach’s entire job is to make sure our teammates are successful and that they have the support and resources they need. They are the bridge that connects the teammate to internal and external supports and makes the teammate feel cared for.”

BRIDGETT BEENE
Workforce Development Manager

ORIENTATION

On a new hire's first day, the Success Coach would do a presentation during orientation to introduce the program and talk about the role of a Success Coach. Additionally, they would introduce them to important resources and let them know what they could expect in their first 90 days. Teammates also received a folder that contained program information and internal and external resources around benefits, education programs, their EAP, and domestic violence support.

From there – still on that first day – the Success Coach would administer an intake survey to help them identify what barriers new staff may be facing. The survey included questions about housing or transportation challenges, food insecurity, and the need for rent or utility bill assistance. It also asked if teammates were working two jobs, had a caseworker, or needed uniforms. And importantly, it asked if they were safe or were facing stress. An “other” category at the end of the intake provided teammates with an opportunity to list any additional barriers that may not be on the survey.

With this information, the Success Coach could determine the teammate's need level. If the teammate had food and housing, felt safe, and weren't stressed, they'd be designated “low” need. If the teammate didn't have housing, had food challenges, or safety concerns, they would be designated as “high” need. The need level was only used internally for Success Coaches to get a general sense of who and how many teammates needed a certain level of support.

ACTION PLAN

On Day Two, the Success Coach would sit down with each new hire, one-on-one, to dig into the intake survey to ensure nothing was overlooked and to discuss the teammate's needs and career aspirations. They acknowledged some teammates may be more open in a conversation versus an intake survey, so this was a second opportunity to learn more.

Based on the information gained from the one-on-one and the intake survey, the Success Coach would create an action plan to identify what was needed personally and professionally to guarantee success in the teammate's first 90 days. If an immediate need was identified – like if a teammate didn't have housing or needed assistance with food – they would connect the teammate to immediate resources, such as one of the food pantries within the hospital, a grocery voucher, or a housing partner. That way, they could address any needs the teammate had in the moment while helping them plan for the future.

Once the action plan was completed, the teammate would be given a copy, in addition to any additional resources they discussed. Then the Success Coach would enter notes into their database, including any referrals they provided, so they could go back to reference the action plan at any time or follow up on what they discussed.

CHECK-INS

While the action plan would serve as the roadmap for support, they knew if it was just used as a passive tool, it would likely fall by the wayside. In-person check-ins would be a critical piece of the program. Check-ins would start with a wellness check two weeks into each employee's tenure. The goal of the wellness checks would be to ensure their new teammates were adjusting well, feeling supported, and enjoying their new role. However, there was a secondary motive too. By reaching out, it would open the door for the teammate to ask for support. They would be able to indicate if they were struggling in their role, if they needed more training, needed more uniforms, or were working second shift and could no longer use public transportation. The wellness checks were text messages linking to a quick survey asking questions like, "How are you doing? Do you have any needs? If so, what are they?" Teammates were also asked to rate their job satisfaction on a five-point scale.

From there, the Success Coach would try to figure out ways they could better assist that teammate. This sometimes involved reaching out to the leadership team to see how they could accommodate a teammate's needs to help them be more successful. This would be especially critical, as new hires may not want to come across as "complaining." The wellness check would help coaches get in front of any barriers the employee might not divulge without someone reaching out to show that they cared.

After the wellness check, they'd do 30-, 60-, and 90-day in-person check-ins. At each check-in, the teammate would complete a survey that inquired about their role; the training they were receiving; and benefits, education, or other information they needed. The Success Coach would follow up and speak with the teammate about how they were doing and discuss any needs. While a teammate may not require assistance at the 30-day mark, they may request it at the 60-day check-in. The 90-day check-in would provide the last survey and formal check-in.

“ A teammate may not put transportation on the survey, but once you speak with them, they may open up more and stress the need for transportation. I’m finding that not all teammates are comfortable answering the intake survey but will open up with a Success Coach.

TANISHA ISOM
Teammate Success Coach Lead

RESOURCE SUPPORTS

While the team would build out a robust array of services, they also understood they weren't equipped to handle all challenges. For example, if a teammate was facing domestic violence or housing insecurity, they would have community partners help them find temporary or permanent housing. This would be facilitated by Advocate's Housing Navigator, who had a wealth of knowledge about different housing and shelter options in the community. By visiting shelters and developing deep relationships with them, the Housing Navigator could truthfully and empathetically speak to the environment about a particular shelter if a teammate was hesitant to go on their own. The Housing Navigator could also help them apply for assistance or look for more flexible options depending on the person's needs.

Internal partners, such as the Advocate Trauma Recovery Center, could provide up to 16 sessions of trauma-specific therapy and intensive case management services for staff who were survivors of an

intentional crime. They also had partners for food, childcare, and other supports as well. Their philosophy was, if Success Coaches couldn't provide resources directly, they would do their best to find someone who could.

To access resources – be it the ones offered directly by Success Coaches or through external partners – Beene built out a Qualtrics form where teammates would be able to request support. To make a request, teammates would fill out the form, including what type of support they needed and when, and if they received support before. Once the form was submitted, it would go to Manson and Beene to be reviewed and to address the need. Requests were granted usually the same day they were made.

Having the form was instrumental for a few reasons: (1) it would create a simple, streamlined way for teammates to discreetly request what they needed; and (2) it would offer the Success Coaches the ability to systematically receive and respond to requests immediately and categorically track what teammates were requesting to identify trends. This second piece was crucial when it came to assessing the program's effectiveness and demonstrating its return on investment.

PROGRAM COMPLETION AND POST-PROGRAM FOLLOW-UP

When they developed the program, the idea was if someone could make it on the job for the first 90 days, they could make it long-term. At this point, even though teammates wouldn't have any more mandatory check-ins or wouldn't have access to program resources, the coaching team still wanted to be involved in the teammate's growth. The Success Coaches might do an office visit, a phone call, or an email – any way to check in on the teammate to make sure they knew they were still important to the organization and that their coach was still there for them. They knew that if they didn't take the initiative to reach out, the teammate may be too busy to do it themselves, and they wanted to create another door for them to ask for help. After their first 90 days, they'd also be eligible to use Advocate's Crisis Fund, which could provide financial support for things like rent, utilities, and car payments.



ERNADA IBRANOVIC,
FOOD SERVICE WORKER

“

I'm a single mom of four kids, and I needed a job that offered stability and flexibility so that I could be there for my family. My current role at Advocate was exactly the opportunity I needed, and their Teammate Success Coaching Program is tremendous.

It brings me joy to work in Advocate's Food and Nutrition department, connecting with patients as I take orders and deliver food to them. I also feel supported in my career now more than ever. Tanisha, my Success Coach, is amazing. I can talk to her about anything, and she helps me with whatever I need to succeed – both as an employee and as a mom.

I've also taken advantage of the resources Advocate provides. For example, when I first started working here and wasn't fully settled into the job, I needed help getting food when I was a little bit short on funds. But that was no problem because Tanisha and Advocate made sure I had food in my home.

It really is life-changing to work at Advocate. I work for a company that brings out the best in me so I can be the best at home with my kids. I want to continue growing here for years to come.”

Read Ernada's full story at
www.caracollective.org/ernada

In addition to ensuring teammates had their needs addressed, the post-program follow-up served a second purpose: Helping teammates navigate career mobility within the healthcare system. They recognized frontline employees – many of whom lacked a college degree – didn't always get as much career guidance or know how to have professional development conversations with their managers, so they wanted to ensure they embedded career development into their post-program conversations. By inquiring about their broader career goals, it would allow teammates to ponder questions like, "What else do I want to do here or where would I like additional exposure to understand what other roles look like?" These conversations also gave them the ability to partner with frontline supervisors to facilitate that development and have more conversations – including pointing them towards internal apprenticeships or upskilling opportunities.

“When the Success Coach proactively reaches out to teammates, it opens the door for them to ask for what they need. Our intentional outreach creates space for our teammates to talk about their challenges and ask for help.”

BRIDGETT BEENE
Workforce Development Manager

5 PREPARE FOR LAUNCH

When the team had to choose a site for the pilot, they selected Advocate Christ Medical Center in the Chicago suburbs, where they could focus on the Environmental Services (EVS) department. They chose this department because it was where they could have the quickest impact, since its teams were seeing the highest turnover. They decided they would launch in July 2022.

CENTER TRUST IN THE COACH-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

As the team got started, one thing became clear: It was vital to build trust between Success Coaches and teammates. Not surprisingly, teammates wanted to be self-sufficient, and it was difficult for them to ask for help. This had been something the team discussed before launching. They asked themselves how they would get teammates to open up and talk to them. They were concerned it would be like pulling teeth – and in some cases, it was. But they often found that once teammates saw the Success Coaches just wanted to help, they were more willing to share. They may walk out of their first meeting with vouchers for food, scrubs, and bus passes, and feel more at ease knowing they can ask for help.

Trust was also key because teammates weren't always willing to open up to their manager in the same way they would with their Success Coach. There would be times a teammate would call off and wouldn't pick up their phone when their supervisor called, but if their Success Coach reached out, they'd pick up right away. The teammate would then share what was going on and, in turn, the coach would help them get in touch with their supervisor. As Manson noted, "It's not just trust with us, but we try to assist with fostering that connection with their supervisor as well."



For example, one teammate was facing housing insecurity and had children. Because finding housing was her sole focus, she wasn't picking up phone calls. But because Manson had built a trusting relationship, she answered his call and shared what she was experiencing, enabling him to assist. Additionally, Manson was able to reach out to their supervisor and say, "This person is having a really tough time. It may take a day or so before they're able to get on track and get balanced." He didn't break confidentiality, or share anything the individual wasn't willing to share. He just wanted the supervisor to know the employee was experiencing some challenges.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANAGERS

Creating partnerships between coaches and managers became instrumental to success. Managers were grateful for Success Coaches because managers weren't always equipped to address teammates' challenges on their own. Therefore, team leaders were in support of the program from day one.

Because managers were on the floor with the support staff each day, they would notice if something was off. If the leader noticed a teammate's attitude or attendance had changed, they could notify the coach, which would signal it could be a good time to check in. They were also receptive to feedback the coaches heard from teammates, making adjustments based on what they heard.

Over time, managers began to change how they engaged with their employees as well. They began to consider more than just attendance. For instance, if they noticed that someone was getting to work late, they began to call them, or if they were onsite, they'd pull them aside to see if anything was going on that was impacting their ability to get to work. When they saw a shift in behavior, they came to the challenge with more compassion and curiosity.

“The only thing I request from teammates is that they ask. I don't know how I can help if they don't tell me what they need.”

RAMIEN MANSON
Sr. Workforce Analyst

6 TRACK PROGRESS AND DEMONSTRATE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

After the Advocate Christ Medical Center program kicked off, it wasn't long before the team realized it was difficult to keep track of the forms and resources they were providing through Excel. Leveraging his technical background, Manson suggested he could build something better if given the time. But this wasn't just a passion project, there was also an immediate need to track the support they were providing. Because they were reporting to payroll, there couldn't be any guessing involved, everything had to be tracked in real time. While Excel allowed them to share files with others, it was also easy to accidentally delete a line, and there was always the possibility it wouldn't be shared properly or that they'd run into a version control issue.

Manson built the new database in Access, which captured the types of resources they offered, the teammate's information, the value of each resource, and how many resources were used. He was also able to link it to the program they used to complete the intake form so that the information could be accessed from the database. With it built out, they could see the percentage of people who said they had a need,

what support was provided, and how well they were meeting those needs.

Over time, the database evolved. While it was initially built to keep track of support they provided, they began to get questions regarding retention rates among teammates engaged in the program. In response, they started using the database to track who was still active and on the job. Demographic information also became important, so they began to track that too. They also added a calendar to keep track of when they were scheduled to meet with teammates, and form emails so coaches could send uniform reminder emails to staff when their 30-, 60-, and 90-day appointments were coming up.

As teammates started taking advantage of the program, they quickly saw the need was there – a whopping 91% of new teammates expressed barriers upon hire, and ~63% took advantage of program resources. While some people needed support in all areas, they found that others just needed help in one area, like transportation.

Tracking data also enabled them to see that a majority of resource requests happened within the first 30 days. In fact, 70% of resources were requested in that first month, 20% in the second month, and 10% in the third month, demonstrating that teammates just needed a little help to get on their feet before they received their first few paychecks.

This had a major impact on retention. At Advocate Christ Medical Center, where they had seen significant staff attrition, **six-month retention shot up to 95% for teammates who completed the program.** Additionally, it cost 50% less than expected to provide resources to all teammates who requested them. Being able to demonstrate the ROI on retention, and the fact that it didn't cost nearly as much as Advocate initially thought, helped make the case to expand the program.

USE LEARNINGS TO GROW AND SCALE THE PROGRAM

In January 2023, Advocate expanded the program to its second site: Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago. They waited to expand until they had their proof of concept at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn because they wanted to ensure they had their framework and the systems and resources in place to make the program successful.

At Illinois Masonic, they went beyond the EVS role to include Food and Nutrition Services and Patient Transporters. They also hired their second Success Coach, Tanisha Isom. Isom had worked for Advocate for 20 years, including 13 years in EVS herself. Having been in a role she would support meant she knew what teammates were



“ Leaders were highly receptive to our partnership and collaboration. Without their willingness to adjust schedules, provide support, and keep us informed about developments with teammates, we would not be able to do what we do.

BRIDGETT BEENE
Workforce Development Manager

TMSC SUPPORT SUMMARY*

262

TOTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

62% (162)

RECEIVED ASSISTANCE

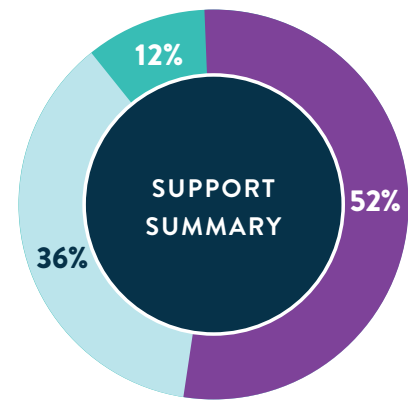
\$198

SPENT PER TEAMMATE (On Average)

\$32,069

TOTAL SINCE PROGRAM LAUNCH

*As of June 2024



Food - \$16,660

Transportation - \$11,452

Clothing - \$3,958

experiencing. Since she'd also worked in Human Resources, she became the go-to for internal questions and resources because she knew the hospital inside and out. Her unique perspective made her perfect for the role.

Over time, the program evolved as the team's insights grew. For example, housing insecurity proved to be a significantly greater challenge than expected, so they started thinking creatively. In addition to referring teammates to partners who could connect them to temporary or permanent housing, they began utilizing an apartment building Advocate had for their medical residents. If there were extra apartments available, they would be able to use those for emergency cases when a teammate was unhoused. Understanding that some staff weren't just couch surfing, but were completely unhoused, enabled them to raise awareness to make the case for support, and helped them to be more prepared to help others facing similar situations.

They also wanted to ensure that resources weren't just available to the support teams but to all staff. To do so, they created a resource page that all employees could access – not just teammates who were part of the program. This included categories like housing, transportation, and food for teammates who were in crisis. They wanted to make it comprehensive, so individuals had a quick way to access resources.

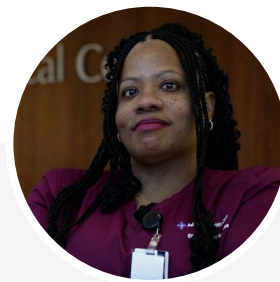
There were some learnings around resource utilization as well. There had been initial concerns teammates would take advantage of the program and ask for resources they didn't actually need. The fear, however, never materialized. Most requests were made in the first 30 days of employment because that was when teammates were most in need. They also found that resources went to different needs than originally expected. For example, more funds

“ We could ask ourselves, ‘What if we hired people who didn’t have barriers?’ But we all have barriers. We all do. Even the president of a hospital has things going on in their personal life. When we tell people, ‘We want you to bring your whole self to work,’ we really need to mean that. And not just say it because it sounds good and it makes us sound like we are an employer of choice. Organizations truly have to put their resources and money behind the statements they make.”

MICHELE SMITH
Enterprise Director Workforce
Development Strategy

went towards food vouchers and transportation. Scrubs took up a bigger piece of their resource budget as well. At the same time, they utilized less for childcare, because many people worked shifts between 3 and 11 pm, when childcare centers weren't open, so staff had to find alternate arrangements. Tracking data to observe these shifts enabled them to redirect the funds to the areas where there were more requests.

Finally, they had to acknowledge what they could and couldn't provide. For example, if a teammate was in an abusive situation, they could provide referrals to resources that could help, but they couldn't intervene. As rent prices increased, there were larger barriers to housing, but they couldn't pay rent for teammates – the cost was just too high. They also acknowledged that other teams could use the support too. For example, nurses, X-ray technicians, or medical assistants may also need help getting lunch for the day or putting gas in their car – which made the company-wide resource page even more critical.



MARIA WILKINS,
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TECH I

“

It had been months since I left my old job, so I really needed employment. I was so excited to join Advocate as an Environmental Services Technician.

Ramien, my Success Coach, introduced himself on day one. He was there if I needed help with anything in my new role or with life in general, but I'm not the kind of person who asks for help. However, even though I was hesitant, I had questions and needed assistance. I had never worked in a hospital before – let alone in the ER where I'd be keeping the rooms clean and safe.

Plus, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to afford or secure transportation in the short-term, so I wouldn't be able to get to work. But Ramien and Advocate were there for me. They provided some Lyft rides and then 30-day bus passes. If I didn't get that initial assistance with transportation and Ramien's guidance throughout my first 90 days, I don't know where I would be right now.

Since starting at Advocate, I've learned so much and am proud to make a difference in patients' lives by making them comfortable in a clean, sanitary room. I see so many opportunities for advancement, and I know the sky's the limit.”

Read Maria's full story at
www.caracollective.org/maria

7 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In Advocate's first two years, 262 individuals went through the Teammate Success Coaching Program at Advocate Christ Medical Center and Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center. Both hospitals experienced a decrease in turnover in the roles supported by the program, with individuals who completed the program experiencing 32% higher retention than others who did not. Job satisfaction for teammates was 92% and 73% who received support through the program are still employed by Advocate.

But the program hasn't just impacted staff turnover; it's impacted how they feel. Manson noted, “The amount we spend per teammate isn't a large cost, but what we found is those teammates now have people who care about them, so they're going to continue to want to grow here.” Having happy employees also improves patient care.

As they look to the future, they have been approved to hire two new Success Coaches – an additional coach at Advocate Christ Medical Center and one for a new site on the South Side of Chicago. They're also looking to expand the program nationally, bringing it to their hospitals in Charlotte, North Carolina. What started as an initial pilot has grown to impact hundreds of staff and is on track to assist thousands more.

WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO

1. **Identify barriers that prevent employees from staying on the job.** A lot of employers might think that their teammates' personal lives are none of their concern, but that couldn't be more wrong. People are people at the end of the day, meaning they live multi-dimensional lives beyond being a teammate who does a particular job. If your teammates are experiencing obstacles in their personal life, like housing or food insecurity, they don't check those worries at the door when they come into work. In fact, they might not show up to the door at all if they are facing insurmountable personal challenges. Without continuously gaining insights from staff, Advocate wouldn't have been able to uncover and address solvable challenges that impacted teammates' ability to stay and succeed on the job.
2. **Make the data-driven case for comprehensive frontline worker support.** Pitch the investment in frontline worker support as a data-driven approach to addressing your company's retention rate. By intentionally tracking how many teammates faced barriers such as housing insecurity and unreliable transportation, Advocate made the case for proactively building a coaching model with resource supports. To demonstrate return on investment, Advocate built a database that tracked all expenses and referrals, which was critical for analyzing trends that made the long-term case for the program's sustainability. For example, data showed teammates mainly needed a small amount of financial support to get them through the first couple paychecks, after which their requests for support declined significantly. This led to the program's estimated expenses to \$100 less per person than originally budgeted. And, because of that investment, the retention rate increased.
3. **Build a coaching model that invests in the whole person.** Everyone wants to live a secure and fulfilling life; and at work, being part of a team that invests in its members plays a huge role in achieving those goals. At its core, the Teammate Success Coaching Program was



“ Our teammates that go back to their community say, ‘I started working at Advocate and I was struggling to afford getting groceries in between checks, but I’m in this program and my Success Coach gave me a gift certificate for groceries and a cafeteria voucher. I was able to feed my family and afford lunch that day.’ That makes all the difference, and that’s what we want.

MICHELE SMITH
Enterprise Director Workforce
Development Strategy

impactful because it allowed employees to feel seen, heard, and cared for at a human level. That's why the Success Coach role has been invaluable for Advocate, as they provide a confidential ear and trusted guidance to new teammates. While not every company needs to replicate the Success Coach role precisely, having a mentor who checks in with support staff regularly, connects them to resources, provides guidance during their first 90 days on the job, and helps set goals for their long-term career can be the difference between someone staying on the job or needing to leave. This level of outreach led to higher job satisfaction and retention, particularly for teammates in high-turnover, entry-level roles.

4. **Create a culture of asking for help and enlist community partners.** People are often reticent to ask for help because there's a stigma around not being fully self-sufficient, especially at work. That's why it was critical for Advocate to offer wraparound support up front and share a full suite of resources they could provide. By framing it as, "These are the types of resources we offer," teammates didn't feel singled out and were more comfortable disclosing their needs. Additionally, Advocate didn't have the knowledge or resources to meet every need by themselves. They leaned on community-based organizations and outside partners to tackle things like housing or food insecurity – not to stretch themselves too thin by taking on those challenges alone.
5. **Start small and then expand beyond a specific role or department.** We have all heard the advice not to scale a program or a business too quickly, and it applies to rolling out a frontline worker support program too. By piloting Advocate's Teammate Success Coaching Program with one role at a single hospital, Advocate was able to see what challenges arose and create systems they hadn't thought of when the program was conceptualized. By learning from successes and failures, and improving the piloted model, they set a strong foundation to scale, enabling the broader hospital system to benefit from their innovation more effectively and sustainably.



**BAINYAMIN "BAIN" YISRAEL,
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TECH II**

“

I had hit rock bottom. I was living in a shelter and knew I needed to change. That's why I came to Cara Collective looking for help with finding employment. I was motivated and ready to give Cara a chance. For nearly a year, I worked with Cara on building up skills and readying myself for a full-time job.

Then, Advocate hired me as an Environmental Services Technician. Even though it took me two-and-a-half hours to get to work and two-and-a-half hours to get back to the shelter, I was committed to succeeding. I was never late and maintained perfect attendance.

I had the support and guidance I needed at Advocate through their Teammate Success Coaching Program. By the end of my first year of work, Advocate even helped me find a home of my own right next to the hospital. I have no commute anymore.

Today, I love my job so much that I wear my Advocate badge everywhere I go. It's who I am.”

Watch Bain's story at:
www.caracollective.org/bain

For more case studies and resources on building an inclusive economy, visit: www.caraplus.org/case

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