

Enhancing Staff Retention Strategies to Reduce Turnover

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1. Background

In 2021, the annual turnover rate was 22 percent for our Data Coordination Unit (DCU), 26 percent for our Regulatory Affairs Unit (RAU) and 33 percent for our Research Biofluid Management Unit (RBMU), within the Clinical Trials Office (CTO) of NYU Langone Health's Perlmutter Cancer Center (PCC), while the retention rate for DCU was 74 percent, 63 percent for RAU, and 57 percent for RBMU. The majority of our staff turnover was related to remote work with increased compensation offered by pharmaceutical companies. With the support of leadership, we implemented methods aimed at mitigating turnover and bolstering retention efforts.

2. Goals

We aimed to reduce turnover to less than 20 percent and increase retention rate to 75 percent in each of these three units and increase retention to greater than 75 percent with the understanding that we would need to evaluate and apply new methods and strategies to achieve these goals. Furthermore, this would require commitment to fostering a better work environment and culture through continued evaluation and refinement of our approaches.

3. Solutions and Methods

Retention initiatives began with a market analysis to ensure our staff salaries were appropriate and competitive. After adjusting salaries based on the market analysis, leadership in each unit developed and refined the career ladders for each unit, promoting internal advancement opportunities. After the implementation of eRegulatory binders, RAU implemented a fully remote work option, DCU implemented a hybrid work environment, and RBMU implemented a flexible work schedule. The CTO restructured and increased management support for DCU and RAU from 7 to 11 and created a management position within RBMU to increase personalized support and oversight for staff. Each unit also received additional resources (DCU – 25% increase, RAU – 29%, RBMU – 30%) to decrease staff burnout and ensure appropriate workload. A staff mentorship program was created to provide a framework for promoting mentored relationships among staff. Furthermore, formal orientation programs were established for each unit, enhancing the onboarding and integration processes for new staff members.

4. Outcomes

In 2023, we reduced turnover rates to 9 percent for DCU, 15 percent for RAU, and 8 percent for RBMU, while increasing retention rates to 89 percent, 84 percent, and 91 percent respectively. DCU's promotion rate rose from 10 percent in 2020 to 27 percent in 2023, and RBMU's from 15 percent to 17 percent. With new hires, RAU aims for similar increases. These strategies not only offer more internal career advancement but also foster a positive work culture and consistent growth across all units.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Looking ahead, we are committed to enhancing our orientation and training programs by creating additional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). With the implementation of the career ladder, we aim to strengthen the mentorship program to provide support for new staff and foster greater involvement

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from senior staff in onboarding new members. We also plan to leverage insights from our annual Employee Engagement Survey to foster a more robust work environment. We continue to closely monitor and evaluate our turnover rates, retention rate, and resourcing needs.