



“Reaching Out, Begins Within.”

A Case Study of Women & Infants Hospital in Providence, RI.

Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island

- ❖ Providence, RI
- ❖ # of beds: - 167 adult, 80 Neonatal ICU, 60 Newborn
- ❖ www.womenandinfants.org
- ❖ # of annual admissions: - 21,766
- ❖ # of annual emergency visits: - 28,924
- ❖ # of annual surgical procedures - 8194

Women & Infants Hospital is the seventh largest obstetrical service in the country and Southeastern New England’s regional perinatal center with active general and gynecological surgical programs. Women & Infants Hospital is dedicated to women’s health care, education and research, which includes the Breast Health Center, Center for Women’s Surgery, The Menopause Center, Program in Women’s Oncology, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology, Prenatal Diagnosis Center, Division of Obstetric and Consultative Medicine, Centers for Health Education, the Division of Research and the Women’s Primary Care Center. The hospital is the primary teaching affiliate in obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics for the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and a member of the CARE NEW ENGLAND Health System, which is committed to the development of an integrated delivery network, enhancing the health of the patients and the community.

Problem:

While the hospital provides many services geared toward diversity improvement, these services were disconnected and without a central point for the hospital to focus on diversity and celebrate diversity achievement, to address issues relating to diversity in the workforce, and promote understanding, respect and acceptance among employees.

Background:

The diversity and inclusion efforts started in the Human Resources Department. It was not just about providing equal opportunities, it was also about creating an all-welcoming environment. Initial efforts were designed to create an environment that encouraged employees to welcome all cultures and spiritual beliefs, and understand the differences among people from around the world. It was important for employees to work more effectively and creatively together. The program was then expanded to provide culturally competent care for our patients. Human Resources developed the Employee Diversity Council by inviting all employees to consider joining. Initial response was low but over time the current council list grew to include 28 members from all over the hospital, including an executive member, a physician member, management members, clinicians and staff. The council provides a voice among an open and committed group of members, discussing issues, creating ideas and implementing solutions.

A key philosophy that the staff embraced is that “there is not one solution to diversity and inclusion efforts”. Additionally, there are many aspects of diversity and inclusion that can all be worked on, simultaneously, by many different departments. Women & Infants Hospital has



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internal and external programs conducted by many different employees and departments, which together leads to success. Everyone gets involved in numerous ways.

Solution:

The creation of the Employee Diversity Council was the focal point of the Diversity and Inclusion revitalization. The makeup of this council reflects the growing diversity of all hospital employees. Open to all employees, this multidisciplinary group provides valued input for the creation of diversity training programs and suggestions for additional ways to educate staff about the importance of recognizing and honoring the many aspects of diversity. The Employee Diversity Council provides resources and information for employees to use when caring for a diverse patient population, researches and maintains information on the hospital’s intranet website, and provides manuals for inpatient units. The Council maintains an online resource manual which provides a wealth of information about different cultures and their spiritual traditions, language, attitudes and beliefs about illness and death. Employees can get tips on ways to best communicate with people of different backgrounds. “Voices of Diversity” is a newsletter which communicates upcoming hospital diversity celebrations, shares employee stories and provide information on diversity topics and information about events in the community. The Council organizes activities and events to help educate employees about different cultures. Those include:

- Introducing employees to many world cultures
- Purchasing diverse artwork for display at the hospital
- Participating in diversity job fairs
- Celebrating such national events as United Nations Day and Black History Month
- Conducting an annual Diversity Festival
- Conducting interactive presentations each month at New Employee Orientation
- Coordinating Diversity Council Brown Lunch Programs
- Developing and implementing a medical interpreter symbolism program.

Results:

The continuing activities and programming by the Employee Diversity Council benefits have helped create a positive environment for existing employees, serve as an attraction for employment candidates, and in goodwill from the community. The Employee Diversity Council has recently conducted its 8th Annual Diversity Festival in the community they serve (Cranston, RI), as they continue to use this vehicle as a tool to spread diversity education.

Conclusion:

Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island found that their most successful strategy for implementing Diversity and Inclusion awareness in their own hospital was by creating an internal committee, the Employee Diversity Council, which shepherded the hospital into integrating more cultural diversity within it’s practices. The council is voluntary and reflects the diverse culture of the hospital’s staff, as well as the community that it serves.