

LIVEWELL NURSING

Workplace Engagement

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

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**COUNTY OF
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**LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO**

Workplace Engagement Tips for Nurses: A Guide for Employees and Leaders

by: Angela Mitchell, CNO



Angela Mitchell

As we welcome Cohort 12 to their new assignments across the agency, let's remind ourselves that workplace engagement is crucial, significantly influencing job satisfaction, retention, quality, and outcomes. Engaged employees are more productive, committed, and willing to go the extra mile for their colleagues and patients. For new nurses, the onboarding process is critical. The Office of Nursing Excellence encourages that our newly graduated residents and newly hired nurses be paired with a mentor during this phase to significantly impact their engagement levels. Research by Mínguez et al. (2023) shows that mentorship contributes to higher job satisfaction and engagement among new employees. Mentors offer guidance, support, and a sense of belonging, which are essential during the early stages of a nursing career.

Additionally, clear communication regarding job roles and responsibilities is vital for alleviating anxiety and enhancing engagement. A study by Fürstenberg et al. (2021) highlights that clarity in job expectations correlates with increased employee satisfaction and engagement.

For existing staff, continuous professional development is a key factor in boosting engagement. Encouraging nurses to pursue additional training and education not only enhances their skills but also fosters a sense of commitment to their roles. An analysis by Moore et al. (2022) indicates that opportunities for professional development are directly linked to employee engagement and retention. HHSA actively provides continuing education workshops, preceptorships, certification opportunities, a robust learning management system, EBSCO host, and tuition reimbursement for further education to support employee growth. Recognizing and appreciating the hard work of existing staff is equally important. Research by Baqir et al. (2020) emphasizes that regular recognition can enhance team morale and individual engagement.

Managers and supervisors play a crucial role in employee engagement. Fostering open communication is essential. Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns can significantly impact engagement levels. A meta-analysis by Decuyper et al. (2021) found that transparent communication fosters trust and engagement among staff. Regular check-ins and feedback sessions help employees feel valued and heard. Promoting a healthy work-life balance is another crucial aspect of maintaining employee engagement. Research by Sopian et al. (2022) indicates that employees who feel supported in balancing their personal and professional lives report higher engagement levels.

Colleagues and co-workers are vital in fostering workplace engagement. Engaging in team-building activities can strengthen relationships among colleagues and promote a sense of community. A meta-analysis by Martín-Hernández et al. (2022) shows that collaborative activities enhance team cohesion and individual engagement. These activities can range from simple team teas or luncheons to more structured meetings aimed at building camaraderie. Creating a supportive work environment is equally essential, as colleagues should encourage one another and assist when needed. Research by Niinihuhta et al. (2022) highlights that social support from peers significantly contributes to employee engagement and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, workplace engagement is essential for enhancing job satisfaction, retention, and the quality of patient care in nursing. By implementing these strategies, new and existing employees, managers, supervisors, and colleagues can foster a more engaging work environment. A culture of support, recognition, and professional development will not only benefit individual employees but also enhance the overall effectiveness of healthcare teams.

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Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's

By: Carla Macias, PHN Supervisor and Araceli Casas, SOA, Office of Nursing Excellence

Public health nursing plays a vital role in uniting our community through health promotion, education, and equity. Leading Cohort 12 of the Public Health Nurse Residency Program has given me the privilege of witnessing the dedication and passion of these 16 public health nurse residents. They represent the future of nursing, and I look forward to seeing their resilience and compassion make a meaningful impact across the various departments in the County of San Diego.

Taylor Carter

Why did you choose public health nursing?

The opportunity to address health disparities, promote wellness, and advocate for underserved populations allows me to be a part of a larger movement. I believe the efforts of departments within public health often go unnoticed, but are essential to a functioning society, acting as the glue that holds communities together, ensuring public safety and well-being to create a healthier environment for all, especially underserved populations.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

I like to consider myself somewhat of a foodie, so trying any new restaurant and sharing a meal with good conversation with friends or family is always highlight in my day. I'm also very task/list oriented, so being able to "check off" my daily to-do list is a small joy to give me a sense of accomplishment. But also, a cup of coffee, laughing with friends, a compliment, positive recognition... life is all about the simple pleasures and little moments.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

Leaving a stable, well-paying job to pursue nursing school for a better future was a significant sacrifice of getting out of my comfort zone and giving up financial security, but I knew it was the right decision for my long-term goals. The opportunity to grow both personally and professionally makes the sacrifice worth it.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

It's so hard to name just one because each place had its own unique beauty and special memories. However, Bora Bora and Puerto Rico stand out to me because of their beauty, not only within their landscape, but their culture, and hospitality from the locals that made them both breathtaking and unforgettable experiences.

What are you most looking forward to?

The opportunity to dive deeper into the functions of various departments and learn the intricate behind-the-scenes work that drives initiatives and collaboration to support the community. I hope to become a subject matter expert and contribute to the development of improving overall public health outcomes



Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



Jena Magpoc

Why did you choose public health nursing? I received my Bachelors in Public Health in 2018. Shortly after, I went back to school for nursing and worked at the bedside. I chose public health nursing to combine my two educational backgrounds together and serve the community I live in.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? Coffee always makes me feel happy and ready to start my day!

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? The most important decision I've ever had to make was to get married.

Where is coolest place you traveled? The coolest place I traveled to was Switzerland!

What are you most looking forward to? I look forward to meeting so many new faces throughout the county and creating new experiences.



Olivia Murphy

Why did you choose public health nursing? I fell in love with it during my last rotation of nursing school. I love patient education and preventative care!

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? Getting in the ocean and spending quality time with my husband and five-year-old son. Throw a cold brew and a fresh cinnamon roll on top of that and the day is made.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? Going back to school to become a nurse after having my son.

Where is coolest place you traveled? Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, "Cradle of Mankind" where some of the earliest hominids have been found.

What are you most looking forward to? Making an impact in the community and building relationships with my coworkers and therapeutic relationships with my clients.



Krystal Sexton

Why did you choose public health nursing? I chose public health nursing because I love preventative medicine and want to see everyone in our community given access to resources that improve their health.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? A cup of coffee

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? The most important decision I have ever made was getting married.

Where is coolest place you traveled? I love tropical places so the coolest place I have traveled recently was Costa Rica.

What are you most looking forward to? I'm most looking forward to getting to travel more with my husband, friends, and family.



Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



Abcede Martinez

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose public health nursing to utilize the opportunity my nursing degree gives me to serve the public community.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

One thing that instantly makes my day better is having a fruit smoothie.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

The most important decision that I have ever made so far is deciding to pursue a nursing degree.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

The coolest place I have traveled to is Puerto Rico; it was during the annual San Sebastian festival so there were beautiful parades and singing celebrating Puerto Rican culture.

What are you most looking forward to?

I am looking forward to working with members of my team, to promoting health and bring services to individuals and families in San Diego County.



Veronica Pelayo

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose public health nursing because I am passionate about health promotion and education. I want to empower members of my community with the knowledge they need to improve their quality of life.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

Seeing my phone screen saver, I have a picture of my little girl and husband.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

Committing to pursue my nursing degree and license.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

Quintana Roo, Mexico

What are you most looking forward to?

I am looking forward to working with members of my team, to promoting health and bring services to individuals and families in San Diego County.

Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



Anna Vanpaepeghem

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose Public Health Nursing because I appreciate the focus on prevention and preventing spread of communicable diseases within our community and thereby keeping our community healthy. I also enjoy providing tools to families to help navigate through challenging times, empower and help build resiliency through education and support.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

One thing that instantly makes my day better is seeing a smile on my child's face, or any child's face for that matter.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

The most important decision I have ever made so far is definitely becoming a mother. It gave my life a much deeper purpose.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

The coolest place that I have ever traveled to is Spain.

What are you most looking forward to?

I am most looking forward to the day that I can finally have work-life balance.



Neil Zurita

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose public health nursing because I have always enjoyed my clinical rotations in community health. I feel so fulfilled of the meaningful impact it brings upon the population and working with diverse and vulnerable populations is something I am truly passionate in. Public health aligns with my values, specifically primary prevention, patient education, providing access to resources, and empowering individuals to take charge of their health. Overall, being able to educate and connect with patients as well as address their health holistically and address social determinants of health to continue working towards achieving equity is the most fulfilling aspect of my work.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

Something that makes me feel better instantly is spending time with my family and friends. Bonding with them and staying in the present moment allows me to find comfort and happiness.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

Moving to the United States has been the most important decision I have made. It has unlocked doors and opportunities for me that would not have been possible for me and my family otherwise. It has allowed me to grow so much as a person and become resilient as I learned to adapt at an early age.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

I think the coolest place I have traveled to will be in Oahu, Hawaii. I really enjoyed this trip because it was right after I graduated and passed my NCLEX. The peaceful atmosphere, warm waters, beautiful nature sights is something that I found refreshing and rejuvenating.

What are you most looking forward to?

I am looking forward to beginning my journey as a Public Health Nurse with the County of San Diego. I look forward to growing both as a nurse and a human being as well as learn from my peers and mentors to allow me to make a meaningful impact in the community and contribute to building better health for the population. ⁸

Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



Melissa Simon

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I have always been drawn to public health and originally got my degree in public health education because I wanted to make a difference in my community. I love that public health nursing allows us to reach populations that might be under served and presents the opportunity to improve the health of entire communities.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

All green lights and no traffic on the 5.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

To go back to school for my nursing degree. It was a major sacrifice at the time, but worth it since I love what I do.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

It is hard to choose, but Iceland and Grindelwald, Switzerland are two of my favorites.

What are you most looking forward to?

I am looking forward to growing as a Public Health Nurse and working with my team.



Nicole Donatelli

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I wanted to treat patients in their own setting or home. Meet them where they are at so to speak. I hope to be able to educate patients and work with more preventative strategies. I love the diversity of the county and getting to experience so many different cultures in a day!

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

My son's smile or laugh!

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

Choosing to become a parent!

Where is coolest place you traveled?

Vanuatu

What are you most looking forward to?

Helping people understand their medical conditions better and as a result becoming overall healthier people!

Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



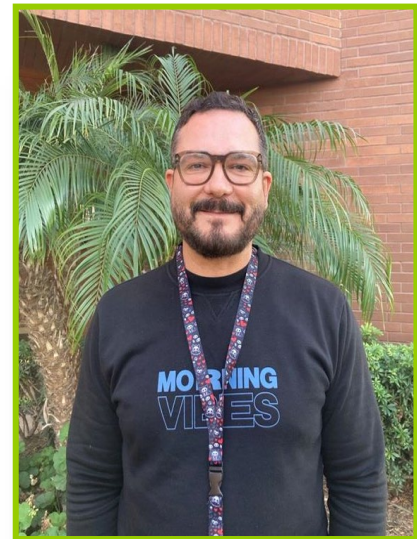
Brenda Portillo Salazar

Why did you choose public health nursing? Passionate in educating my community in efforts to promote health and prevent illnesses.
What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? Knowing I am making a difference in my Community's Wellbeing.
What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? Starting a Family
Where is coolest place you traveled? Loreto, BCS Mexico
What are you most looking forward to? Completing the PHNRP and starting my new position.



Jorge Martinez

Why did you choose public health nursing? I was interested in working in Public Health because, unlike traditional nursing, public health nursing offers a wide variety of roles, where you can work with an individual, addressing their needs, and the same time with the community or population.
What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? Seeing people smiling and greeting each other.
What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? Move out of my country, continue my professional studies and start a new job position.
Where is coolest place you traveled? Mexico by far...the place with the greatest diversity of places, food, and activities.
What are you most looking forward to? Continue growing in my job, contribute my ideas and projects to the community and complete my adoption process.



Celia Pirita

Why did you choose public health nursing? I choose Public Health Nursing because I have a passion for making an impact in the health of underserved communities and working towards lessening the gap among health disparities.
What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? After a long day, seeing my two cats instantly makes my day better.
What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? Taking a leap of faith and pursuing a career in Nursing. This decision has been very rewarding, and I feel that I am making a difference in people's life.
Where is coolest place you traveled? Jordan especially the ancient city Petra.
What are you most looking forward to? I am most looking forward to the opportunity to acquire new knowledge, skills, and expertise that will help to continue to grow professionally.



Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's

Gillian Werolin



Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose public health because I wanted to help prevent health issues by working on improving upstream causes of health

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

Seeing a cute dog or taking a walk in the sun

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

My decision to go to SDSU for nursing school brought me my home, my friends, and my career

Where is coolest place you traveled?

Exploring the caves in the Fuji Five lakes area of Japan

What are you most looking forward to?

I'm most looking forward to working with my team to help improve health outcomes of San Diego

Kevin Nguy



Why did you choose public health nursing?

I chose public health nursing because I wanted to create change in the community and help be a part of a team where we can directly see the impact that our roles have.

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?

I love having KBBQ with friends & family.

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far?

The most important decision I have made so far is choosing to work at the County of San Diego as a public health nurse. As a New Grad Nurse, it was a tough decision, but I believe that it was the right one for me.

Where is coolest place you traveled?

Singapore

What are you most looking forward to?

I'm most looking forward to how my career with the County of San Diego will look like moving forward!

Residency Cohort 12 New PHN's



Jae Anne Ramos

Why did you choose public health nursing? I chose public health nursing because I wanted to give back to the community that I was raised in! It fills my cup being able to go out into the community, meet such a diverse and beautiful group of people, and be able to be there for them in their times of need!

What is one thing that instantly makes your day better? One thing that never fails to put a smile on my face is being able to take a little walk and get some sun on my skin. Especially when I'm able to share that time with my friends and loved ones!

What is the most important decision you have ever made so far? The most important decision that I have made so far was to step into the vast world of nursing. It was year, bumpy road but has opened so many doors to opportunities of a lifetime!

Where is coolest place you traveled? I was fortunate enough to live in Japan for a couple years, and being able to visit places like Hiroshima, Okinawa, and Nagoya was year,! However, I'm going to be going to Bora Bora soon, so we will see which one will come out on top.

What are you most looking forward to? Something I am looking forward to is growing within the county. When I finish my master's program next year, I hope to be able to reach further heights and continue to be the best nurse I can.

“As a nurse, we have the opportunity to heal the heart, mind, soul and body of our patients, their families an ourselves.

They may not remember your name, but they will never forget the way you made them feel.”

-Maya Angelou

Workplace Engagement

By: Jan Renae Sebastian, RN BSN PHN

Let's face it: some days just feel like you're on autopilot. No one wants to feel like a robot at work—especially when you're a nurse! Fortunately, workplace engagement can help turn those monotonous days into something a lot more rewarding.

Employee engagement is a human resources (HR) concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward their job. Engaged employees care about their work and about the performance of the company and feel that their efforts make a difference (Pincus, J.D. 2024).

Committed nurses feel a sense of purpose, resulting in higher job satisfaction and improved emotional well-being. This not only improves the quality of care for patients but also fosters collaboration and open communication with the healthcare team.

Nurses who feel supported, driven, and recognized are also less likely to experience burnout, reducing turnover and maintaining consistency in patient care. Correspondingly, this creates a more trustworthy and effective care environment for patients.

So how do we motivate our nurses?

One of the County of San Diego's organizational strengths is embracing a sense of belonging. From meaningful recognition awards to professional development opportunities to shared governance workshops, the county's workplace culture enhances an environment where employees feel vital in their roles and that their ideas are valued. When county nurses feel appreciated, empowered, and mentally healthy, it becomes easier to face the challenges of the job with a smile (and maybe even a laugh or two). Ultimately, an engaged nurse is a happy, productive nurse—and happy nurses have H.E.A.R.T.!



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Workplace Engagement: Nurse Resiliency and Job Satisfaction

By: Yasmin Gaddum, BSN, RN, PHN, CCM QAS, Medical Care Services, Office of Nursing Excellence

Workplace engagement is crucial for nurses to reconnect with their healthcare purpose. Higher burnout and exhaustion occur in organizational environments lacking engagement, particularly among public health nurses (PHNs) who faced challenges during COVID-19. Techniques to promote nurse engagement include providing psychological empowerment and job crafting. Registered nurses working in public health have been shown to have a positive relationship between actively crafting their jobs and feeling empowered. This relationship is facilitated by managerial support, nursing experience, and adequate staffing, which foster engagement (Harbridge et al., 2023). PHNs must be supported with coping strategies to improve the ability to handle stress and increase productivity in the workplace. Nurses can effectively address challenges and manage demanding situations with the right strategies and organizational support for communication and skill development, ultimately enhancing productivity (Sutarno et al., 2023). Transparency is key for nursing team morale.



Left-Right: Susan Callies, Alejandra Sanchez Lopez, Araceli Casas, Nicole Whiteing, Donna West, Mariana Badial, Janette Wolski, Carla Macias, Liberty Awa, Noah Alegrado, Yasmin Gaddum, Angela Mitchell and Kevin Bui

Workplace Engagement: Nurse Resiliency and Job Satisfaction

By: Yasmin Gaddum, BSN, RN, PHN, CCM QAS, Medical Care Services, Office of Nursing Excellence



Lowering moral distress and improving resilience can increase workplace engagement. Factors that enhance this are more excellent nursing experience, increased confidence in skills, ability to overcome emotional stressors, and more satisfaction with patient care (Clark et al., 2022). A work-related, positive mental state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work can be lower among nurses with higher moral distress. Resilience-building practices can improve nurse engagement by nurses healthily adapting to or recovering from significant stress, minimizing personal suffering, and maintaining integrity. Resilient nurses experience greater workplace engagement, lower workplace stress, and decrease the likelihood of nurses leaving their jobs (Clark, 2022). These suggested resources can help boost nurse workplace engagement and build stronger healthcare organizations for the future.

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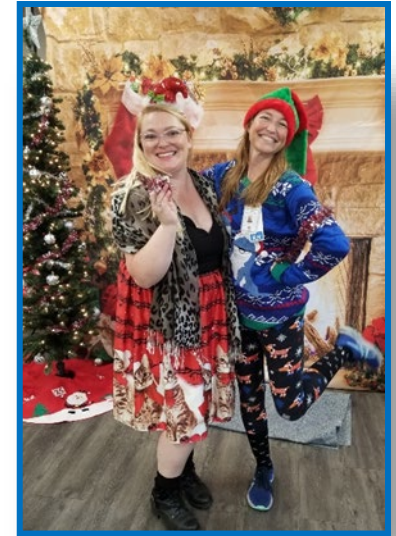
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Engagement!

By: Michelle Zittlau-Johnson, Senior Public Health Nurse, Tuberculosis Control & Refugee Health

There are many factors that affect nurses and their level of engagement in role, department, or organization, and the 2022 Nurse Salary Research Report points out a few factors. Long hours, fatigue and burnout, and minimal benefits were identified as hindering nursing engagement. Other factors mentioned in this report are a lack of support and lack of collegiality. Many Public Health Nurses at the County may be thinking that all of these factors fall squarely with nursing management and executives, however this is not the case. All of us can step in to help mitigate these factors for our fellow PHNs. Preventing burnout and demonstrating support for our PHNs are incredibly important in determining whether a nurse will feel motivated and invested in their role within the county, and whether they will stay. It is all of our responsibility to ensure nurses feel safe, supported, and part of a team.

“Because nurses’ work engagement is significantly associated with job satisfaction, nurse leaders need to find ways to promote nurses’ job satisfaction and retention (Wei et. al, 2023).” As a Senior Public Health Nurse within the Tuberculosis Control and Refugee Health Branch (TBCRH), there are multiple opportunities to be engaged in the incredibly important work we do. I am a member of TBCRH’s Shared Governance group because I believe in supporting a departure from the “top down” model of the everyday work of PHNs. As TBCRH Diversity Champion & Department Rep within the PHS Equity Working Group I help set our department Equity goals such as organizing get-togethers and potlucks highlighting food and music from our various cultures/ethnicities. I am also collaborating on creating a more ‘user-friendly’ end-of-treatment questionnaire for our clients with active Tuberculosis disease. As the Co-chair of PAC (Professional Activities Committee) for all PHNs within the County of San Diego, I work to ensure every PHN in every department has their voice heard at the highest level. As part of this role, I also lead the planning of the all-day Spring PAC event with multiple speakers and opportunities for PHNs to connect and engage outside of our specific job roles.



Engagement!

By: Michelle Zittlau-Johnson, Senior Public Health Nurse, Tuberculosis Control & Refugee Health



In our Health and Human Services Administration's Strategic Plan one goal is for there to be "engaged employees who feel valued, have a sense of belonging and are motivated to work together toward one vision." In my experience morale, comradery and knowing you are seen and supported by at least one fellow colleague at work really can make all the difference. I am proud that in the Tuberculosis Control and Refugee Health Branch we make the time and effort to see each other's strengths and offer to help each other when a fellow PHN needs support. We also recognize each other for ways in which we excel at our roles as PHNs and take time out every month for team building. My hope is that every Public Health Nurse at the County of San Diego feels valued and embraces opportunities for engagement and brings other PHNs along with them.

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2022 Nurse Salary Research Report: Trends and Insights for Leaders and Recruiters. Retrieved on December 12, 2024, from: <https://www.relias.com>

LIVEWELL NURSING



April: *Community Engagement*



Please e-mail submission (ideas, photos, articles, trainings, dates, accolades, local or national news, etc.) to

Araceli.Casas@sdcounty.ca.gov



For consideration in next issue, please submit entries by close of business on April 18, 2025. Submission limits: 125-275 words



2025 Topics

January: New Beginnings/Resolutions

February: Sustainability

March: Workplace Engagement

April: Community Engagement

May: Nurses Week posters

June: Equity

July: Service Delivery Coordination

August: Immunization Awareness

September: Preparedness Month (shelters/wildfires, etc.)

October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month

November: Gratitude & Kindness

December: Systems & Technology