

Project Abstract

Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE), a nurse-driven program based at NYU Meyers College of Nursing, is a collaborative of over 600 healthcare organizations that aims to provide the highest quality of care to older adults. NICHE has two main goals: improving the quality of care for older adults and improving nurse and staff competence in the specialty practice area of geriatric nursing. NICHE organizations report improved outcomes of care, decreased costs and lengths of stay, and reductions in 30-day readmissions, as well as higher patient and staff satisfaction (Boltz et al., 2008; Pfaff, 2002; St. Pierre & Twibell, 2012; Swauger & Tomlin, 2002). The NICHE faculty work with participating organizations to evaluate the quality and safety clinical practice and works with frontline nursing staff, nurse managers and directors to develop evidence-based practice designed for the unique needs of older adults.

With increasing age and disabilities of the residents and shortened hospital stays, the demand for nursing homes to provide services that are more complex is growing (Feng, Grabowski, Intrator, & Mor, 2006). The number of residents and level of care in nursing homes will rise dramatically over the next decade. Over 15,000 nursing homes across the United States serve approximately 1.4 million frail older adults. This includes over 200 nursing homes in Washington, serving approximately 17,000 Washingtonians on any given day (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS], 2015).

Nursing homes play an important role in the providing care to frail elders with complex care needs. Yet, the nursing workforce employed in this sector of the healthcare delivery system often lack with specialized knowledge or skills to effectively care for the specialized needs of older adults. For example, effective care for older adults requires focused assessment skills to differentiate normal changes of aging from signs of disease. Moreover, effective care for older adults requires a coordinated, team approach to respond effectively to changes in clinical status.

With this application for Civil Money Penalty (CMP) funding, we propose to engage 30 Washington nursing homes in NICHE-LTC for a three-year period commencing on September 1, 2019 and ending on August 31, 2022. NICHE-LTC includes a Leadership Training Program (LTP), an eight-week on-line educational program after which teams participate in a mentored yearlong quality improvement project focusing on two clinical areas. Through NICHE-LTC, nurses, including RNs and LPNs, and CNAs, complete a specialized continuing education program on the care of older adults. The education program supports the development of staff competencies, that in turn, lead to improvements in the quality of care and resident outcomes, resident care, and staff competencies.

NICHE had partnered with Comagine Health to evaluate staff, resident, and organizational outcomes associated with the NICHE-LTC program. Led by Principle Investigator, Eileen Sullivan-Marx PhD, RN, FAAN, we will analyze data gathered from front-line staff and the year-long clinical practice improvement project as well as publicly reported quality measures to evaluate the outcomes of this project.

Leadership Training Program (LTP)

The NICHE-LTC LTP is aimed at clinical leaders who are responsible for implementing the NICHE program in their organization. In order to provide this course in a flexible, user-friendly means, the LTP is an eight-week blended learning course available on-line. During the LTP, participants learn how to implement the NICHE model by developing skills in Change Leadership, Person-Centered Care, QAPI, and Reducing Preventable Hospitalizations. Participants work with their team and guided by our expert mentors to complete assignments including Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Building Your Team, and Developing an Action Plan. This course provides participating licensed nurses with 20 continuing education contact hours through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Following this eight-week course, NICHE mentors monitor the implementation of the team's action plan and provide feedback via conference calls at three, six, and nine months following the LTP. For this project, we propose to add quarterly one-hour webinars during the second and third project years to reinforce learning and engage with participating nursing home team to solidify clinical practice change. During these webinars, we will share NICHE program updates, highlight recently updated or new evidence-based resources, and provide an opportunity for networking and sharing of ideas among participating facility teams.

The LTP participants revise the course texts used to guide program implementation efforts:

- Sullivan-Marx, E. M., & Gray-Miceli, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Leadership and management skills for long-term care*. New York: Springer Publishing Company
- Boltz, M., Capezuti, E., Fulmer, T., & Zwicker, D. (Eds.). (2016). *Evidence-based geriatric nursing protocols for best practice* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, LLC
- Fulmer, T., Glassman, K., Greenberg, S., Rosenfeld, P., Gilmartin, M., & Mezey, M. (2020). *Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders: NICHE*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, LLC

Geriatric Resource Nurse and Geriatric Certified Nursing Assistant Courses

Nurses, including RNs and LPNs, can participate in the NICHE-LTC Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) course. This includes more than 20 hours of on-line learning addressing important issues in geriatric care such as sensory loss, pain, falls, and pressure ulcers. Nurses completing the GRN course receive continuing education contact hours through the ANCC. Recognizing the important role of CNAs in the overall quality and experience of care, NICHE offers a Geriatric Certified Nursing Assistant (GCNA) track. The GCNA program includes online modules on topics such as sensory loss, falls, function, and nutrition as well as modules to enhance CNAs' skills to collaborate with various members of the interdisciplinary team. CNAs receive certificates of completion for the program. Nurses and CNAs completing the NICHE continuing education courses receive recognition as GRNs and GCNAs, respectively. Additionally, the courses for licensed nurses helps to prepare RNs to take the ANCC Gerontological Nursing Certification exam. Learning modules include pre- and post-tests to evaluate change in individuals' knowledge in the care of older adults.

For this project, the GRN and GCNA courses will be offered on-line via the NICHE Knowledge Center, our learning management system. This format allows for robust monitoring and evaluation of project implementation and results. During the LTP, NICHE staff will work with

nurse leaders from each nursing home to identify a plan for their CNAs and nurses to engage in their respective GCNA or GRN educational programs. Additionally, during the clinical change project review calls occurring at three-month intervals during the first year in the program, the NICHE mentors will review each team's progress implementing the GCNA and GRN educational programs. NICHE leaders will highlight any updates to the GCNA and GRN courses and encourage continued staff development through these courses during the second- and third-year webinars.