The Role of the Nurse Manager/ Educator During Orientation

We already have established that nurse preceptors provide an extremely valuable service to their organizations. Given that the nursing shortage is quite evident, the preceptor role is even more important. Nurse recruitment is essential; however, retaining nurses may be a challenge as well. Nursing retention has a positive financial impact on organizations, but also it provides us with the opportunity to work alongside the nurses that we have worked so hard to train! Preceptors spend a lot of time and energy assisting their preceptees in becoming valuable team members. It is disappointing to work so hard to precept new nurses, assist them in becoming an integral part of the department, and then watch them leave. Managers and educators have a key role in providing support to their preceptors, thereby assisting them in dealing with preceptor challenges.

To be successful during orientation, preceptors require the assistance of their managers and educators. Nurse managers and/or educators should be viewed as coaches. By definition, the responsibility of a coach is to assist in the development of their “players,” and to help them become an effective team member, or in this situation, a competent preceptor. Coaches provide guidance, inspiration, empowerment and feedback to their team members. Successful coaches are good communicators, making expectations clear and providing advice when a preceptor may be uncertain about how to handle a situation.

Treating preceptors with respect, challenging them, and providing effective feedback of their performance shows commitment to the preceptor and to the job at hand. Also, it demonstrates an understanding of the responsibilities of the preceptors. Managers and educators should discuss mutual expectations with the preceptor at the beginning of the orientation process. The availability of professional growth opportunities also should be discussed. Preceptors should be provided the time and resources needed to stay current with nursing standards of practice and nursing research. Preceptors have a responsibility to seek this knowledge as well.

Managers and educators are a fundamental component of the orientation process and an important resource to preceptors.