

At Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital (KSB) in Dixon, a focus on workforce engagement and retention starts at the top. Leaders participate in rounding regularly, engaging their teams on what's working well and areas for improvement toward solving one of the top issues in healthcare: building a vibrant workforce in the face of talent shortages and hypercompetitive environments. Leaders also discuss how they can best support their teams in meeting workforce goals.

KSB's approach to staffing goes beyond leadership, though. The rural health system has adopted a holistic approach with three key strategies—alignment, pipeline programs, and transparency and personal touch—that has led to a nearly 50% reduction in the vacancy rate between KSB's 2022 and 2023 fiscal years.

Here's a look at each strategy, based on best practices, which has aided KSB in making a meaningful impact in recruiting and retaining talent to provide excellence in care for patients.

**Alignment:** Strong relationships between recruitment teams and function leaders are critical to maximizing effectiveness. KSB created a NERD Committee—Nursing Engagement, Recruitment, and Development—with key players in nursing and human resources. The NERD Committee regularly:

- Reviews plans for recruitment
- Builds pipeline programs
- Acts on feedback from the front line
- Prepares for the future by maximizing talent

As part of this strategy, KSB's talent manager meets regularly with hiring managers to gain a deep understanding of each role and the success profile for internal and external candidates.

**Pipeline Programs:** Situated in a rural area with a smaller talent pool, KSB places a strong focus on building talent from within the community.

According to KSB, supporting certified nursing assistant team members in pursuit of their nursing degree has paid big dividends. In addition, KSB provides financial support across disciplines so staff can develop and pursue advanced education. That support is tied to retention commitments, which benefit the team member and organization.

**Transparency and Personal Touch:** Top talent has options in a competitive hiring environment, making it essential to move faster and with fewer roadblocks than the competition. For its job postings, KSB provides "pay transparency" by including pay ranges to remove wasted time in the process when there is a misalignment of compensation expectations.

Other actions include:

- A simplified job application process to reduce candidate drop-off
- An interview process focused on making the best decisions
- Speed from when the candidate applies to when that candidate receives a job offer
- Acting quickly when the process identifies a great candidate—often extending an offer at the end of the candidate's interview day

Adopting these strategies has positioned KSB to continue to recruit and retain a talented workforce that meets patient needs.

KSB's decades-old tagline, "It's the People," applies to both team members and the patients they serve.

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