

**Pathway to Excellence® Case Study:  
Atrium Health Navicent Peach  
Peach County, Georgia**

Atrium Health Navicent Peach (Peach), part of the Advocate Health system, was officially designated a Pathway to Excellence facility for the first time on March 25, 2024. The president of Advocate Health set a goal for all Advocate organizations to be designated in either Pathway to Excellence (Pathway) or Magnet Recognition. Peach chose to pursue Pathway as the standards resonated with the foundational work necessary to create a positive practice environment. Peach is a 25-bed critical access hospital and has three units: Emergency Department, Medical/Surgical, and Surgical Services. At the time the decision was made to pursue Pathway, team relationships were strained, and the Pathway standards provided an excellent roadmap for improving teamwork.

**Critical Access Hospital's Shared Governance Leads to Remarkable Outcomes**

Building a shared governance structure was the important initial step to creating the work environment that the Pathway standards demand. Staff were skeptical that they would be included in shared decision-making, however, after one year and multiple successful clinical and internal well-being initiatives in place, shared governance council members were advocating to other staff to become involved. Making the council interprofessional was key to its success. Through shared governance, staff felt their voices were heard, collaborated with leadership to meet quality and safety goals, connected with the community to provide community health events, networked with colleagues throughout the Advocate enterprise, and understood better how to navigate the system and work with leaders to implement programs to meet the organization's mission.

**Pathway to Excellence Benefits**

The Pathway journey reaped numerous benefits for staff, patients, and the organization. All staff members were included in the journey, not just nursing services. All staff were welcome to be members of the interprofessional shared governance council, participated in recognition events such as the Pathway designation celebration and DAISY and BEE awards, participated in daily recognition shared in electronic thank-you cards, and created recognition communication boards to display recognition received by everyone, from leaders, patients, patients' families, and teammate to teammate. Recognition was also placed in the organization's newsletter, the Peach Jammer Press,

for all to see. Professional development opportunities and well-being tools were made readily available to staff with resources to enhance their physical, emotional, fiscal, and spiritual well-being. Staff engagement, respect, and accountability have all improved since embarking on the Pathway journey. The increase in staff engagement was evident with 98% of nursing staff participating in the Pathway survey.

### **Nurse Recruitment and Retention Outcomes**

The successful implementation of the Pathway standards led to an impressive decrease in nursing vacancy rates. Peach started their Pathway journey during their highest vacancy rate. Nursing vacancy rates decreased from 30% in December 2021 to 0% in May 2023. Peach converted 30% of its agency nurses to full-time positions. Peach has not utilized any contract nursing since May 2023.

### **Nursing Professional Development Outcomes**

Professional development has become a priority for Peach's nursing team. Peach has increased nurse specialization certification from two nurses to five nurses. All nursing leaders exceeded their employee engagement stretch goal, meaning that six out of six questions exceeded benchmark for the employee experience. Ten percent of its nurses returned to school for higher degrees, including LPNs and RNs. Participating in shared governance has increased nursing leadership development and inspired succession planning for future leadership roles. Nurses also have been more involved in the community at health events and can utilize community engagement towards clinical ladder advancement.

### **Making Staff Well-Being a Priority**

Well-being initiatives such as Take Five to recuperate from an emotionally challenging event at work, the implementation of a Relaxation Room to recharge staff, making work-life balance a priority, and creating a safe workplace with zero tolerance for violence, all enhanced staff well-being. Staff also took pride in and outside their work environment and created a program that contributed to recycling to help the environment.

### **Patient Satisfaction Scores Notable Increase**

Patient experience scores increased based on the positive practice environment created at Peach. Prior to the Pathway journey, the Patient Experience threshold was 64%. At the end of 2023, overall Patient Experience scores were 81%. Peach also received multiple best patient satisfaction awards from their hospital system and had the highest HCAHP scores in the Navicent Market for 2023 at 82%.

### **Quality Outcomes Exceed Expectations**

The improvement of interprofessional collaboration through shared governance led to the development of a Rapid Response team. Fall prevention education resulted in decreasing fall rates from 5.07 per 1,000 patient days in 2022 to 4.41 per 1,000 patient days in 2023.

Barcode scanning improved from 75% to 99%. Through the Pathway endeavor, nursing staff are more engaged and take ownership over their nursing practice, providing better outcomes.

Quality measures also improved and exceeded the stretch goal targets. Peach has not had a CLABSI in nine years, a CAUDI in eight years, or MRSA infection in over 2 years, providing patients with excellent outcomes. Peach exceeded stretch goals for overall readmissions, mortality, and hospital-acquired infection rates.

## AHN Peach QPX Goals – December 2023



### Pathway to Excellence Experience

Pathway designation was set as a goal, but now it is a way of life at Atrium Health Navicent Peach. The Pathway experience has helped the organization and staff grow exponentially and harmoniously through this journey.