

Promoting Stellar Team Performance to Achieve Stellar Results at MetroHealth

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We are caring people caring for people—that is the service promise of The MetroHealth System.

Unfortunately, caring is getting harder and harder. But we know we must remain caring, even while compassion fatigue and provider burnout become more prevalent.

To provide the highest-quality care consistently, healthcare leaders must nurture and promote the resilience of their caregiving teams while respecting and enhancing their sense of value. At MetroHealth, we believe that our culture must embrace all, treat all, employ all, and see value in all. This approach starts with our system's core values—the STAR IQ values:

- Service to others
- Teamwork
- Accountability
- Respect
- Inclusion and diversity
- Quest for excellence

SERVICE TO OTHERS

We provide care at a mission-driven, urban, academic medical center. As one of America's Essential Hospitals, MetroHealth is dedicated to delivering high-quality care for all, including the most vulnerable. We provide safety-net healthcare, trauma services, health-care professional training, public health programs, and disaster relief in the community. Our team faces intense challenges ranging from the opioid crisis to a high level of preterm births. These are among the many causes of our compassion fatigue.

To address this fatigue, we make resiliency training and mindfulness coaching available to all employees. During each monthly training session, participants explore topics such as “The Art of Setting Priorities: Learning to Say NO” and “Self-Compassion: Coming

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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DOI: 10.1097/JHM-D-18-00084

to Accept and Like Ourselves.” Monthly Schwartz Rounds, a program developed by the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, provide opportunities for our caregivers to discuss—openly and honestly—the social and emotional issues they face in caring for patients and families. As a result, they are able to make better personal connections with patients and colleagues and gain insight into their own responses and feelings.

In addition, our Arts in Medicine department presents more than 700 hours of live music annually for staff and patients throughout the health system. The 15- to 30-minute programs provide respite to help everyone recharge and refocus on better care. Additionally, we bring pet therapy sessions to our high-intensity providers in the intensive care unit and emergency department, as well as art therapy sessions to our entire healthcare provider population.

We also recently kicked off Code Lavender, a rapid-response intervention that helps employees address critical emotional situations, such as having to tell parents their child has died or having to deliver a serious diagnosis. The intervention may entail something as simple as a hug and a care kit filled with mints and lavender lotion or something as sophisticated as team grief counseling. When a team has reached its collective emotional limit, any staff member can call a Code Lavender.

As part of the response to a request for help, every member of the affected team receives a blue and gold bracelet that says, “Caring People Caring for People.” These bracelets serve as cues for others to be extra kind to the people wearing them.

TEAMWORK

TeamSTEPPS is a program developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to help teams achieve high reliability and improve patient safety. MetroHealth provides TeamSTEPPS leadership training for every employee as an integral part of incoming employee orientation.

Also, employees with a shared interest can start an employee resource group (ERG). ERGs are sponsored by an executive leader and supported by our Office of Inclusion and Diversity. In addition to delivering the benefits of professional development and employee engagement, ERGs serve as support networks for their members. Christian Fellowship, Diverse Nurse, Emerging Leaders, Gay–Straight Alliance, Green Team, Hispanic Forum, MetroHealth Veterans, and Women at Metro are among our ERGs.

ACCOUNTABILITY

MetroHealth leadership demonstrates its appreciation to caregivers with a mentoring program. The program emphasizes mentors’ and mentees’ shared accountability for performance improvement and professional development. Thus, it promotes an enhanced sense of value for all participants.

The mentoring program is a collaboration between our department of Human Resources and Office of Inclusion and Diversity. The participation of inclusion and diversity professionals helps to ensure that the organization is living its values by creating bridges between diverse people. Although participants come to the mentoring program

for their own reasons, most mentees are looking to gain skills that will help them advance in their careers, while mentors view it as a way to “pay forward” the mentorship they received early in their own careers.

RESPECT

We host art exhibits in our corridors, featuring the work of anyone from physicians to rehabilitation technicians, to highlight the idea of inclusivity. The art provides a lens for viewing other people’s perspectives and lives. It also prompts discussions among team members to promote respectful dialogue about different points of view.

An employee-sourced hardship fund helps employees who are experiencing (as determined by the social work staff) special needs following unforeseen emergencies.

We have also implemented a Walk a Mile program, in which executive leaders spend a day shadowing care team members—walking a mile in their shoes—to broaden the understanding and appreciation for the work the frontline staff performs every day. This exercise stimulates the executives’ empathy as they make decisions that affect staff and generally serves to strengthen connections between staff and leadership. During a recent Walk a Mile session, an executive leader learned of the frustration that staff members felt in cleaning and transporting soiled equipment. The leader then brought together every area that was involved in the process, helped remove the obstacles, and ensured that the entire organization learned about the improved process.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

MetroHealth’s Office of Inclusion and Diversity communicates our special commitment to valuing every staff member. Our focus is as much on inclusion as it is on diversity. We encourage team members to speak up, and we assure them that their voices are heard. We do this both through structured meetings and by providing unstructured access to executive leadership. This commitment is evident in our hiring practices as we reach out to underrepresented groups in our community to ensure a diverse pool of qualified candidates. Consequently, in 2017, 82% of our nonphysician manager hires and 75% of our new physicians brought diverse backgrounds and reflected our gender-inclusive ideal.

During our new employee orientation, we run scenarios that highlight unconscious bias and discuss appropriate ways to avoid and resolve situations in which bias threatens. We also celebrate our diverse cultures and heritages through our art exhibits, and we welcome staff participation in critical strategic decisions that affect the entire organization.

QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

To promote everyone’s role in our shared corporate destiny and an appreciation for the various talents our team members bring to the organization, MetroHealth holds an annual Think Tank, similar to the TV show “Shark Tank,” where individual caregivers and teams make the case for special projects to a panel of outside experts. Hundreds of ideas were submitted during the program’s first three years, and we awarded funds ranging from

\$5,000 to \$1.2 million for more than a dozen projects, including a children's book describing MetroHealth's mission to care for all and a rehabilitation house for patients.

In 2017, MetroHealth initiated our Best in Class leadership training program for every level of management. This two-day, off-campus program covered topics such as crucial conversations, strengths-based leadership, innovation, and how to run a successful meeting. Participants selected their own management and self-help books from a library curated by internal subject matter experts. Early program participants told us that they gained skills for managing their day-to-day stressors and improved their understanding of finance and business matters. They also created a community of colleagues to reach out to for support. Cohorts continue to meet online as well as in person. And following its initial success, the program now occurs annually to support new managers and individuals who wish to enter management ranks.

CONCLUSION

These demonstrations of MetroHealth's core STAR IQ values illustrate concrete ways we promote our culture—one that embraces all, treats all, employs all, and sees value in all. Our concerted efforts are supporting solid business results as well, including employee loyalty, as exemplified by a turnover rate for registered nurses that is half of the national average of 17.5%; 30% revenue growth over the past five years; and a 3.9% operating margin in 2017, compared to 1.2% in 2012.