



Nursing Annual Report 2024



KootenaiHealth

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Kelly Espinoza, CNO

Transformation in Action!

2024 was a very successful year at Kootenai Health. Much of this was due to the incredible work of our nursing enterprise. As I look back on all we achieved, I am filled with gratitude for our nursing and clinical teams, our nursing leadership and our collaboration with clinical partners and providers. Each time we have set the strategic direction and outlined our goals; this team has stepped up and achieved! Some of the highlights and components of the strategy and successes are outlined here:

Human Resources Transformation

- **Stabilize the workforce;** as demonstrated by our strong retention rate and focus on pipeline and hiring, we achieved a 13% turnover rate. This falls well below national bench marks as well as internal targets for jobs and positions at Kootenai.
- **Pipeline;** we began our first cohort in our co-branded Kootenai Health/Idaho State University (ISU) accelerated bachelor's program in May 2024. We had nine students who blazed the trail for others and will graduate this group in May of 2025. This is only the beginning of our collaboration with ISU and offering this educational opportunity to our staff and community.
- **Time to hire;** we exceeded the goal consistently averaging 8-9 days from time to application to offer made/accepted.

Elevation the Kootenai Health Experience

- **Patient experience and employee engagement;** this is central to nursing. We moved the needle significantly in Emergency department, behavioral health and ambulatory surgery and made

improvements in the inpatient setting in many areas. We improved our employee engagement from our baseline in February 2024 of 3.99 (1-4 scale) to 4.10 in November 2024. This represents a statistically significant improvement!

Accelerate Growth and Create a Friction-Free Front Door

- **ED throughput and increasing volume through the transfer center;** the ED is our front door. The staff, providers, and leadership went off-site to determine how to improve ED throughput and patient experience. Patient experience improved from 58.85% in February to a high of 72.94% in September.

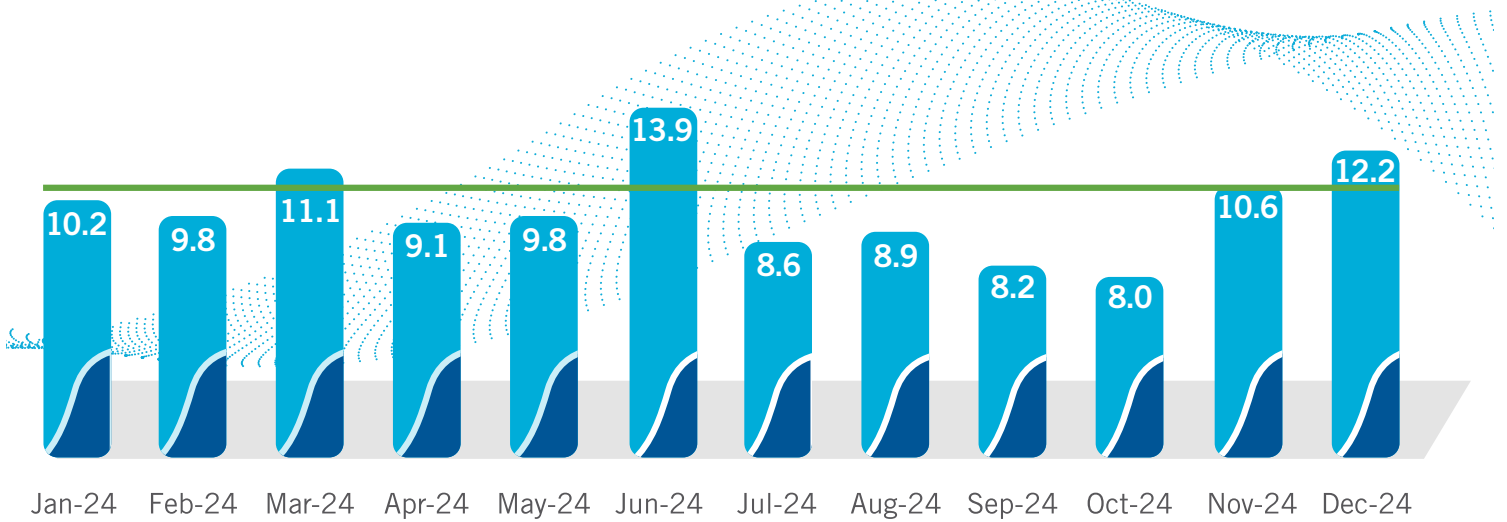
Strengthen our Financial Position

- **Reduced contract labor and increase volumes and backfill;** we continued to reduce our contract labor spend to our lowest level pre-pandemic. Additionally, we increased volumes in surgery, deliveries, ED visits, cath and interventional labs to positively impact our financial bottom-line.

Throughout the report is evidence of the commitment to excellence, passion for patient care and the collaboration of our teams to serve our patients, their families and our region. I am so proud to work at Kootenai Health be a part of a team offering the best care anywhere!

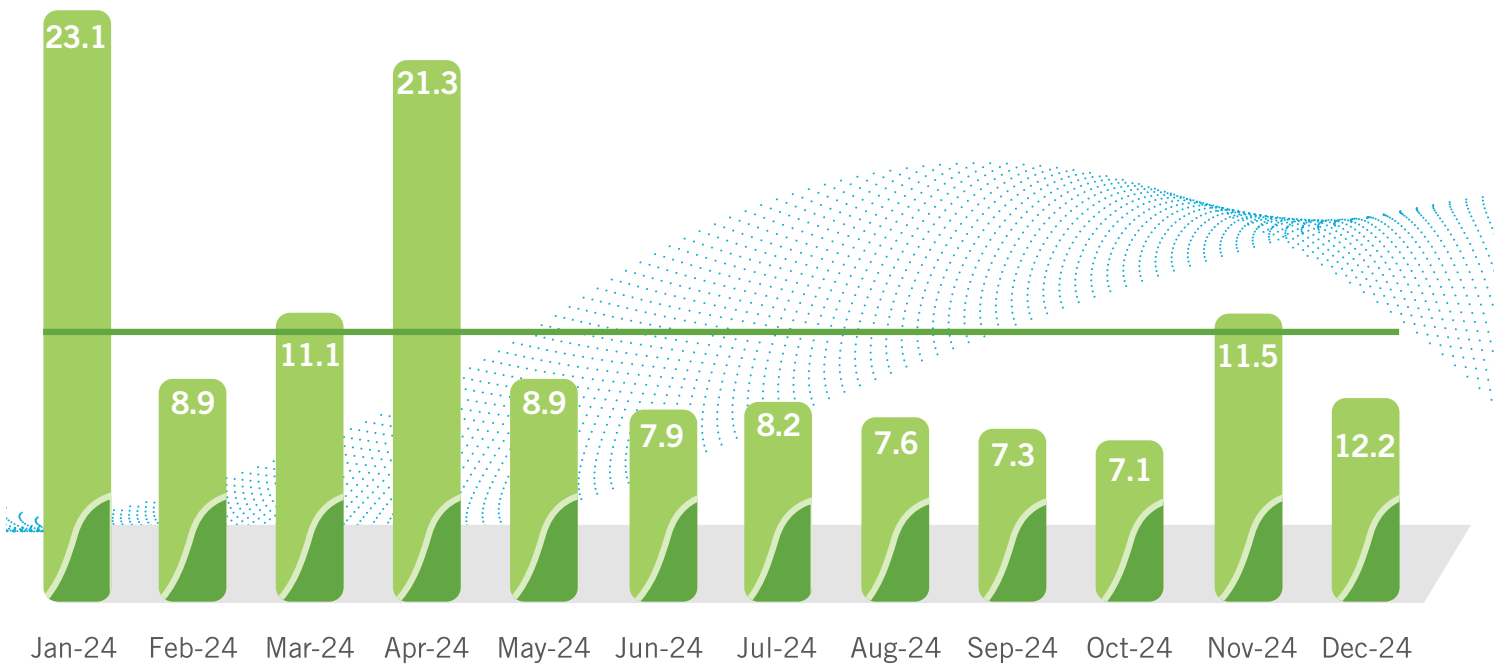
Nursing Time to Hire (Days)

Nursing Time to Hire (TTH) Goal (Days)



Clinic Time to Hire (Days)

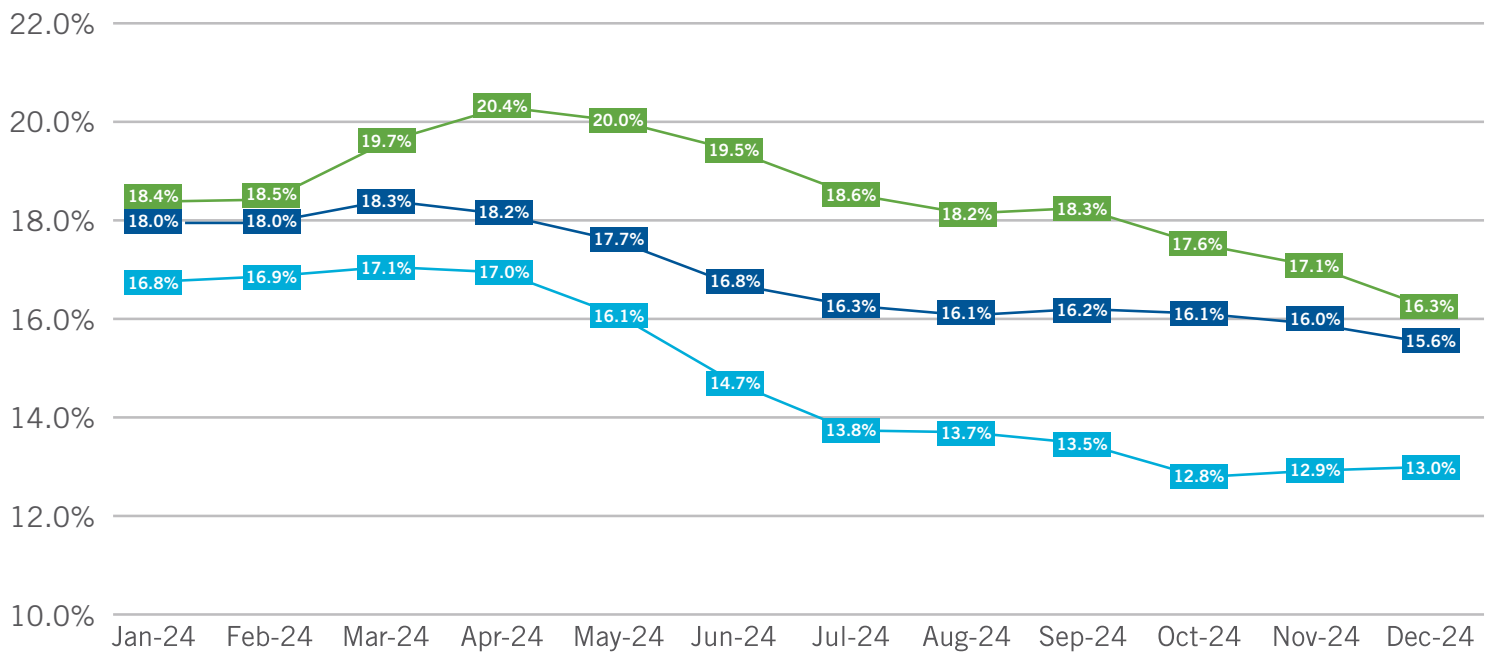
Nursing Time to Hire (TTH) Goal (Days)



Voluntary Turnover

Rolling 12-mo Average

Overall Voluntary Turnover RN Voluntary Turnover Clinic Voluntary Turnover



Magnet Status Update

A Magnet hospital is a medical facility recognized for its excellence in nursing practice and innovation. This prestigious designation is awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to hospitals that meet rigorous standards in patient care, nursing excellence, and professional practice. Achieving Magnet status signifies a hospital's commitment to creating an environment where nurses are empowered, leading to improved patient outcomes and higher staff satisfaction.

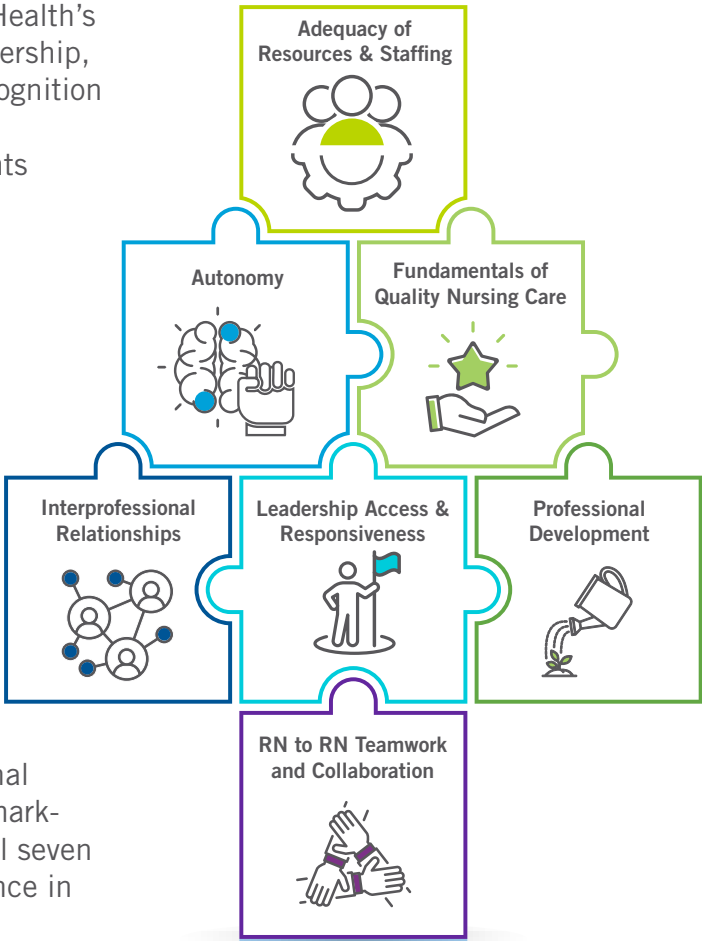
Kootenai Health has consistently demonstrated its dedication to nursing excellence. Since first attaining Magnet recognition in 2006, Kootenai Health has successfully maintained this status through multiple re-designations. Notably, it is one of only two Magnet hospitals in Idaho. This achievement underscores Kootenai Health's ongoing commitment to providing superior patient care and fostering a supportive environment for its nursing staff.

The Magnet designation evaluates various aspects of a health care organization, including patient satisfaction, nursing satisfaction, quality of patient care, employee recognition, community involvement, and professional development opportunities. By excelling in these areas, Kootenai Health not only enhances the well-being of its patients but also cultivates a workplace where nurses and other health care professionals can thrive.

Maintaining Magnet status is a testament to Kootenai Health's unwavering focus on quality improvement, nursing leadership, and interdisciplinary collaboration. This prestigious recognition reflects the organization's dedication to upholding the highest standards in health care, benefiting both patients and the broader community.

Nurse Engagement:

Kootenai Health is committed to prioritizing the needs and voices of its staff members. In February 2024, Kootenai participated in the Press Ganey Engagement Survey to gain valuable insights into staff morale and identify opportunities for improvement. The survey saw an impressive overall participation rate of 92%, with 96% of Kootenai's nurses responding. This high level of engagement reflects the staff's dedication to shaping a positive work environment. To maintain Magnet status, Kootenai Health must exceed the national benchmark in at least four out of seven categories. Remarkably, Kootenai's nurses surpassed the benchmarks in all seven categories, demonstrating their commitment to excellence in patient care and highlighting the strength of Kootenai's organizational culture.



Professional Development

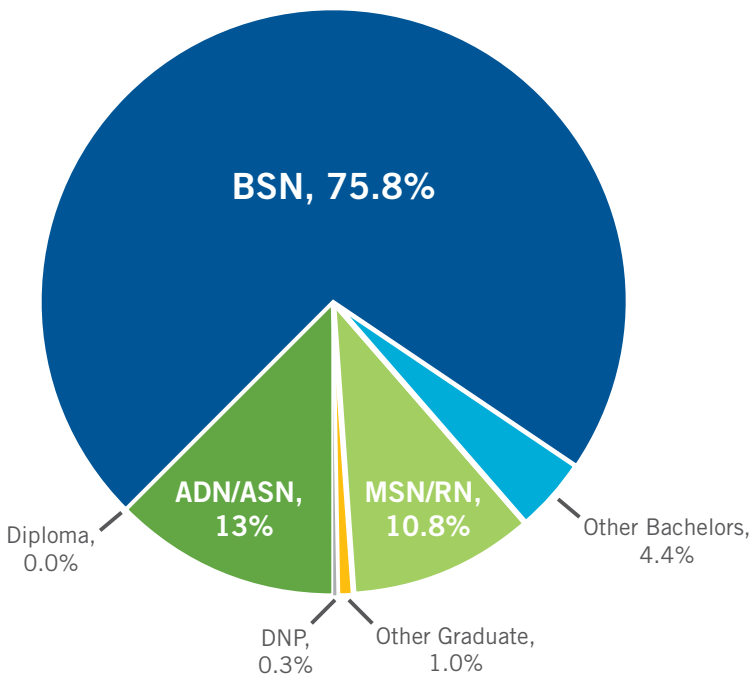
Kootenai Health continues to set the standard for nursing excellence, with an impressive **88% of its nurses holding a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree or higher**. This achievement reflects the organization’s commitment to **high-quality patient care, professional development, and evidence-based practice**. Research has consistently shown that **higher levels of nursing education** are linked to **improved patient outcomes, lower mortality rates, and enhanced clinical decision-making**. By prioritizing **BSN-prepared nurses**, Kootenai Health ensures that its nursing workforce is **equipped with the advanced skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern health care, drive innovation, and provide superior patient care**. This commitment aligns with national recommendations from the **Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)**, which advocate for increasing the proportion of BSN-educated nurses to strengthen the health care system. Through **ongoing education, tuition reimbursement, mentorship programs, and a culture of lifelong learning**, Kootenai Health continues to invest in its nurses, reinforcing its position as a **leader in nursing excellence and professional development**.

Kootenai Health proudly upholds its commitment to nursing excellence and professional development, with 45.7% of its nurses achieving professional nursing certification in their respective specialties.

Certification signifies advanced clinical expertise, dedication to best practices, and a commitment to delivering the highest standard of patient care. Studies have shown that certified nurses contribute to improved patient outcomes, lower complication rates, and greater confidence in clinical decision-making. By supporting and encouraging nurses to obtain professional certifications, Kootenai Health fosters a culture of continuous learning, professional growth, and excellence in patient-centered care.

This achievement reflects the organization’s dedication to empowering its nursing workforce, enhancing specialty knowledge, and ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality health care services to the community.

Nursing Workforce Educated at a BSN Level or Higher
Data as of 12/31/2024



New Degrees Earned by Kootenai Health Nurses in 2024

NAME

DEGREE

Betsy Munson	MSN in Health Care Administration, August 2024
Amanda Powers	MSN in Nursing Education, September 2024
Sarah Koziol	BSN, May 2024
Bailey Gillihan	BSN, August 2024
Andrea Hubbard	BSN, May 2024
Audrey Kuetemeyer	DNP, December 2024
Ashley Suazo	BSN, August 2024

NAME

DEGREE

Kelly Pol	DNP in Professional Leadership, April 2024
Carley Higgins	BSN, May 2024
Jessica Olmsted	BSN, December 2024
Allison Prewitt	MSN, December 2024
Benjie Hughes	BSN, December 2024
Bridget Lyons	BSN, December 2024
Mariah Toms	MSIM, March 2024
Deena Johnston	BSN, July 2024



Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing (ABSN) Program at Kootenai Health

Idaho State University and Kootenai Health launched the Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing (ABSN) undergraduate program in May 2024 as a strategic initiative to address the growing demand for registered nurses. The program integrates RN Clinical Instructors and faculty, ensuring students receive comprehensive hands-on training in various health care settings.

The inaugural cohort consists of nine students who have gained practical experience through clinical rotations in:



- 3N/3S/3E
- 1N
- Emergency Department (ED)
- Pre-operative/Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (Pre-op/PACU)
- Operating Room (OR)
- Inpatient Behavioral Health
- Youth Acute Unit
- Critical Care Unit (CCU2/CCU3)
- Acute Rehabilitation Unit (ARU)
- Outpatient Wound Clinic
- Outpatient Infusion Center
- Post Falls School District (PF Elementary and High School)

All nine students are on track to graduate with their BSN degrees in May 2025. Recognizing the program's success, ISU and Kootenai have committed to expanding the cohort size for the 2025-2026 academic year to accommodate up to 20 students. Additionally, six students from the current cohort have already applied to the 2025 Kootenai Health Nurse Residency Program.

Kootenai Health's Helmet Safety Initiative Promotes Injury Prevention in North Idaho

From January to June 2024, Kootenai Health's Emergency Department treated 942 patients for trauma-related injuries caused by falls, vehicle accidents, assaults, and other incidents. Among these cases, 87 involved pediatric patients aged 14 and under, many of whom sustained injuries from bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and other recreational activities. Alarming, a significant number of these young patients were not wearing protective gear, highlighting the need for enhanced safety education and prevention efforts.

To address this issue, Kootenai Health's Trauma Injury Prevention program launched a comprehensive helmet safety initiative in Northern Idaho. Led by Kirstin Haley, BSN RN, the program coordinated a series of free Bike Rodeo and Helmet Safety events aimed at reducing traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) among children engaging in wheel sports. These efforts were supported by Kootenai Health's Communications, Marketing, and Purchasing departments and the Kootenai Health Foundation, which facilitated the events through advertising, logistical support, and the provision of helmets and educational materials.



2024 Bike Rodeo in Hayden

From May to June 2024, Kootenai nurses volunteered at nine educational events, providing helmet safety and concussion prevention education to 385 school-aged children and community members. These sessions included presentations on head anatomy, types of head injuries, concussion symptoms, and proper helmet use. Participants were also given personalized helmet fittings and taught how to stay safe while riding on roads, sidewalks, and trails. The initiative resulted in the distribution of 635 free helmets, significantly enhancing community access to essential protective gear.



The success of this initiative was driven by the dedication of 29 clinical nurses and three non-clinical nurses who volunteered their time and expertise. Kootenai Health recognized their contributions through internal communications, social media acknowledgments, and the Nursing Excellence Clinical Ladder Program, which awarded points to nurses based on their volunteer efforts.

By prioritizing injury prevention education and providing free helmets to the community, Kootenai Health has significantly advanced public safety and reduced the risk of head injuries among children in Northern Idaho. The program's positive impact was evident in the increased use of helmets during recreational activities, demonstrating the effectiveness of this proactive approach to trauma prevention.

2024 Nursing Awards

Nurse Preceptors are selected for their ability to create an environment that promotes learning, professional growth and development. They stand out as experts in their clinical knowledge and display a positive and inclusive attitude. In short, they exemplify the Kootenai Health Way of Safety, Compassion and Engagement.

Tanna More, RN-BSN, Wound and Ostomy Care, named Nurse of the Year



Nominees included:

- **Kate Oliver, BSN, RN**, Stroke and STEMI Program Coordinator
- **Catherine Espinoza, BSN, RN**, Internal Medicine Clinic
- **Brandy Lawhead, BSN, RN**, Manager Behavioral Health Services, Youth Acute
- **Kelly Breakie, BSN, RN**, 3 East, Onc/Neuro/ Gen Med

Jamie Adcock, RN-BSN, 2S, named Nurse Preceptor of the Year



Recognizing our GEMS: Nursing Excellence Program

The Kootenai Health Nursing Excellence Program (NEP) is an evidence-based program founded on the five domains of magnetism; empirical outcomes, transformational leadership, structural empowerment, exemplary professional practice, and new knowledge, innovation, and improvement. This voluntary, peer-reviewed program recognizes clinical nurses for their professional achievements and contributions to improve patient outcomes and further Kootenai Health's mission to improve health one patient at a time, in a friendly and professional culture, with superior safety and quality.

NAME

AWARD

Oksana Abrosimov	Star Garnet
Kara Baron	Star Garnet
Brooke Birsette	Star Garnet
Aran Borgman	Star Garnet
Korri Branson	Star Garnet
Teresa Deuling	Star Garnet
Alisha Dickey	Star Garnet
Kelsey Erickson	Star Garnet
Lindsey Etchison	Star Garnet
Rianne Evans	Star Garnet
Jordan Fiorini	Star Garnet
Mei Fong	Star Garnet
Josh Gallegly	Star Garnet
Sabrina Gibbons	Star Garnet
Josh Gordon	Star Garnet
Timothy Graef	Star Garnet
Katherine Gwin	Star Garnet
Summer Halland	Star Garnet
Melissa Hayes	Star Garnet
Kristie Hiiva	Star Garnet
Lisa Hughes	Star Garnet
Klayton Johanson	Star Garnet
Juanita Johnson	Star Garnet
Kelly Kincaid	Star Garnet
Lynne Kinson	Star Garnet
Christie Koziol	Star Garnet
Taylor Lundy	Star Garnet
Deanna Martin	Star Garnet
Rebekah Mejia	Star Garnet
Alyson Meschko	Star Garnet
Shirley Miller	Star Garnet
Julie Moak	Star Garnet
Andria Myers	Star Garnet
Kaelianne Newbold	Star Garnet
Cassandra Oddy	Star Garnet

NAME

AWARD

Stephanie O'Hara	Star Garnet
Jodie Peters	Star Garnet
Lauren Petticolas	Star Garnet
Jerrett Plunkett	Star Garnet
Rachel Pottenger	Star Garnet
Molly Preston	Star Garnet
Jason Pringle	Star Garnet
Sharon Ramsay	Star Garnet
Jeff Sample	Star Garnet
Catheline Seigmund	Star Garnet
Ashley Stadelman	Star Garnet
Brittany Storm	Star Garnet
Darby Tingelstad	Star Garnet
Sidney Wilson	Star Garnet
Tyler Wiseman	Star Garnet
Alicia Abel	Opal
Megan Baker	Opal
Kelly Breakie	Opal
Sara Brush	Opal
Rebecca Clark	Opal
Andrea Collins	Opal
Kaylene Corrick	Opal
Jessica Daugharty-Sterner	Opal
Sherry DeCoteau	Opal
Elaina Rose DiMarco	Opal
Carolyn Dolan	Opal
Catherine Espinoza	Opal
Wendy Ferguson	Opal
Courtney Fraize	Opal
Jacqueline Goldworm	Opal
Michele Goode	Opal
Stephanie Hall	Opal
Katy Hess	Opal
Jillian Hiatt	Opal

The point requirements and award ranges are set annually and in alignment with the nursing strategic plans. This year Kootenai Health is proud to announce their support for this program by increasing the award values. **Star Garnet: \$4,000/year, Opal: \$3,000/year, and Topaz: \$2,000/year.** All applicants meeting the program requirements will receive the award matching their point value. Congratulations to our 2024 Gems!

NAME AWARD

Michelle Hixson	Opal
Francine Jones	Opal
Lisa Kolenda	Opal
Kimberly Kraack	Opal
Heather Kreis	Opal
Paul Kugler	Opal
Kennady McComb	Opal
Danielle Miller	Opal
Rebecca Miracle	Opal
Chris Montgomery	Opal
Alaina Muehlhausen	Opal
Mackenzie Porter	Opal
Jennifer Porto	Opal
Kellie Rhodes	Opal
Wendy Roller	Opal
Bobbi Stammers	Opal
Caralea Tanner	Opal
Mariah Toms	Opal
Athan Wade	Opal
Amber Whitehead	Opal
Shawn Wilbur	Opal
Dustin Williams	Opal
Coulter Wyant	Opal
Josee Bassett	Topaz
Anne Bear	Topaz
Phylicia Bearpaw	Topaz
Colton Bellamy	Topaz
Shannon Belton	Topaz
Brinley Brown	Topaz
Vickie Brown	Topaz
Emily Burns	Topaz
Michelle Burton	Topaz
Courtney Carver	Topaz
Juliette Charlet	Topaz
Perry Davis	Topaz
Darrell Day	Topaz
Afton Elam	Topaz

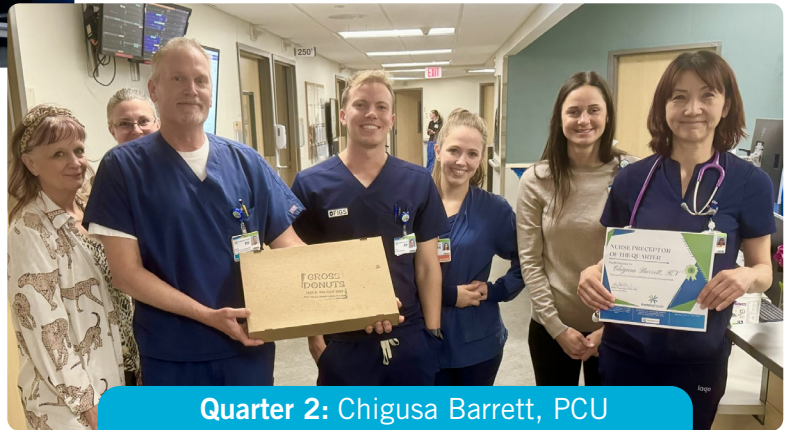
NAME AWARD

Madison Frederick	Topaz
Scott Gunderson	Topaz
Alexander Hagar	Topaz
Hillary Harmon	Topaz
Taylor Henderson	Topaz
Gregory Holcomb	Topaz
Kortney Holt	Topaz
Lori Jackson	Topaz
Amanda Johnson	Topaz
Mariah Johnston	Topaz
Erika Jorgensen	Topaz
Lauren Kling	Topaz
Diana La Riviere	Topaz
Janelle LaGesse	Topaz
Jessica Lenon	Topaz
Daniel Longchamps	Topaz
Lydia Maxwell	Topaz
Crystal Mccown	Topaz
Mia McRory	Topaz
Julia Merrill	Topaz
Amber Mondell	Topaz
Michael Montreuil	Topaz
Alexandria Pierce	Topaz
Diana Rees	Topaz
Elina (Satu) Schultz	Topaz
Rebekah Sefton	Topaz
Laura Seitz	Topaz
Katie Stang	Topaz
Monica Stroemsvik	Topaz
Jonathan Tullsen	Topaz
Krista Valiquette	Topaz
Marli Vincent	Topaz
Heidi Williams	Topaz
Karen Wilson	Topaz
Andrew Womelduff	Topaz
Kristin Wood	Topaz
Cindy Yost	Topaz

Nurse Preceptors of the Quarter



Quarter 1: Jann Kinnard, 3N



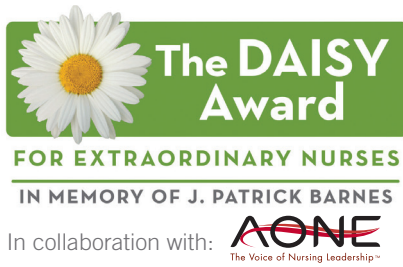
Quarter 2: Chigusa Barrett, PCU



Quarter 3: Allie Pierce, 1N



Quarter 4: Alec Davis, MOR



Daisy Award Program

The DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Award is an international recognition program that honors and celebrates the skillful, compassionate care nurses provide every day. The DAISY Foundation was established by the family of J. Patrick Barnes after he died from complications of the auto-immune disease in 1999. During his hospitalization, they deeply appreciated the care and compassion shown to Patrick and his entire family. When he died, they felt compelled to say “thank you” to nurses in a very public way.

Stephanie Hollibaugh Named 2024 DAISY Nurse Leader Award Honoree

Kootenai Health proudly recognizes **Stephanie Hollibaugh, Heart Center Manager, as the 2024 DAISY Nurse Leader Award recipient.** Stephanie received twelve nominations from colleagues across departments—reflecting her exceptional leadership, compassion, and dedication.

Stephanie is known for her calm, collaborative style and genuine care for her team. Without prior CVOR experience, she took the initiative to learn and improve the department’s culture. One nominator shared, “The CVOR is healthier and stronger than it has ever been in my 16 years here—and that’s because of her.”



**DAISY Nurse Leader of the Year,
Stephanie Hollibaugh, MSN, RN,
Manager, Heart Center Holding**

She is described as hands-on, accessible, and always advocating for staff and patients. Whether solving problems at the bedside or guiding new departments, Stephanie leads with integrity. Her leadership of the Heart Center and CVOR, both high-acuity areas, is marked by a strong commitment to patient care, empathy, and excellence. Congratulations, Stephanie! Your leadership reflects the best of Kootenai Health nursing.



1 North Receives 2024 Team DAISY Award for Outstanding Compassion and Teamwork

This award honors their outstanding commitment to patient care, teamwork, and resilience during a year of major challenges. Despite high staff turnover, many nurse residents stepped up as preceptors, supporting new team members while managing full patient loads. Their efforts created a positive, welcoming environment praised by new and temporary staff alike.

Caring for high-acuity patients—including those with dementia, delirium, and end-of-life needs—the 1 North team consistently shows compassion, professionalism, and unity. From charge nurses to CNAs and HUCs, everyone contributes with calm and strength. Leaders commend the team’s resilience and shared dedication to safety, compassion, and excellence. **Congratulations, 1 North—you truly embody the Kootenai Health Way.**



Nicol Rouse



Colton Bellamy



Madison Frederick



Sarah Bauer



Lisa Kolenda



Lisa Richards



Amy Ferrell



Andrew Womelduff



Ben Cheney



Michelle Burton

2024 Individual DAISY Award Winners

Nicol Rouse, RN-BSN, 2 East

Colton Bellamy, RN-BSN, 2 South

Madison Frederick, RN-BSN, 2 East

Sarah Bauer, RN-B-BSN, PACU

Lisa Kolenda, RN-BSN, Cancer Services

Lisa Richards, RN-B, PACU

Amy Ferrell, RN-BSN, Labor & Delivery

Andrew Womelduff, RN-BSN, 2 East

Ben Cheney, RN-BSN, 2 East

Michelle Burton, RN-BSN, Heart Services

Hannah Platts, RN-B-BSN, Critical Care



Sunshine Award

The sunshine award was created by nurses to recognize the invaluable work of our supporting staff without whom we could not do our jobs. This award honors the positive contributions made by our CNAs, HUCs, ED Techs, PSAs, MHS and housekeepers.

Other support staff who have gone above and beyond to impact patient care can also qualify. All nominations are submitted to our Nursing Work Environment Committee for consideration and selection.



2024 Individual Sunshine Award Winners

Fran Grimshaw, HUC/Monitor Tech, Heart Services

Sakoya Cato, HUC/CNA, 2 East

Christine Norem, HUC/CNA, Labor & Delivery

Marjorie Nicolabo, HUC/Can

Mae Aranaydo, HUC, PACU

Sally Hoefer, Outpatient Services Coordinator, Kootenai Clinic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

Andia Blenz, Specimen Processor II, Laboratory

Michael Whitmore, HUC/CNA, PACU

Terri Sumner, Phlebotomist, Laboratory

Tarayn Shenk, CNA, NRT

Diann Waddell, EVS Tech I, Housekeeping



Spark Award

The Spark Award is a monthly recognition for employees who go above and beyond in living out the values of the Kootenai Health Way. These team members show excellence, integrity, compassion, and dedication in all they do.

The Spark Award recognizes employees not just for exceptional performance, but also the spirit and attitude that inspires others. Whether it's through promoting safety, showing genuine compassion, or fostering strong engagement, recipients of this award are true role models who "spark" positive change wherever they go.

Selection for the Spark Award rotates monthly among three key committees:

- **Safety Committee** – Recognizes actions that promote a safe environment for staff and patients.
- **Compassion Committee** – Honors those who show extraordinary kindness and empathy.
- **Engagement Committee** – Celebrates efforts that build strong relationships and team spirit.



SparkAward

2024 Spark Award Winners

Caroline Krusemark, Clinical Coordinator, 1 North

Madison Ferrara-Ellison, RN-B-BSN, 2 East

Don Horton, Security Officer II, Security Services

Guadalupe Owen, Speech Pathologist, Rehabilitation Services

Mark Brown, Perfusionist, CVOR

Kara Baron, RN Care Manager, Kootenai Clinic Internal Medicine

Nicholle Cruz, NRT Float I, Nursing Resource Team

Melanie Patterson, Medical Laboratory Scientist I, Laboratory Services

Alden Ranberg, Desktop Support Lead, Information Technology

Robert "Alex" Barrows, RN Case Manager, Adult Recovery Unit

Forensic Nursing Excellence (FNE) Program

Expanding Forensic Nursing Services to Support Victims of Crime

In 2024, the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program at Kootenai Health grew its services to better support crime victims locally and in nearby states. The team cared for 359 cases, helping victims from northern Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Oregon. There was also an increase in hospital consultations, showing a growing need for forensic nursing across departments. To meet this demand, the Forensic Team is available 24/7 so that any patient who may be a crime victim can get expert care right away.

Foundation Support for Forensic Nursing

The Kootenai Health Foundation has helped expand Forensic Nursing services with a two-year grant from the Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance. In the first year, the grant funded staff training, program management, on-call shifts, call-backs, and court testimony. In the second year, it continues to support training, meetings, court testimony, and management. Two generous donors also contributed by buying a training stretcher and covering staff time not funded by the grant. This support has been key to strengthening the Forensic Nursing team.

Training and Education for Forensic Nursing Excellence

Kootenai Health's Forensics Program remains an International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) Certified SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) training site. This certification enables the program to train nurses from rural hospitals and neighboring states, extending the reach of specialized forensic care to underserved communities. By equipping more nurses with SANE training, the program is helping to build a stronger network of medical professionals skilled in supporting victims of crime.



Kootenai's Forensic Nurse Examiners: Jennifer Bailey and Brittany Ramirez

Strengthening Community Collaboration with SART+

In January 2024, the FNE Department, in collaboration with Safe Passage, reestablished the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART+). The "+" in SART+ represents an expanded focus that goes beyond sexual assault to include a broader range of crimes such as child maltreatment, elder abuse, domestic violence, strangulation, physical assault, drug-facilitated abuse, human trafficking, and more. This expanded approach emphasizes a coordinated, victim-centered response involving law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders. By fostering stronger community partnerships, SART+ aims to enhance resources and improve outcomes for victims.

Supporting the Legal Process for Crime Victims

Forensic Nurses at Kootenai Health play a vital role in the judicial process by providing expert testimony and detailed medical documentation. In 2024, FNE team members testified in court 15 times, contributing to the successful prosecution and sentencing of 22 perpetrators. While many factors influence the outcome of criminal cases, the expertise of the Forensic Team is instrumental in ensuring justice for victims.

As the demand for Forensic Nursing services continues to grow, the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program remains committed to expanding its reach, enhancing partnerships, and providing the highest level of care and advocacy for victims of crime in our community and beyond.

Kootenai Health Nurse Internship Pilot Program

Nurse Interns:

The Kootenai Health Nurse Internship is a new pilot program approved by the Idaho Board of Nursing (IBON) that allows nursing students entering their last year of nursing school to work alongside nurse preceptors to gain added clinical experience. Kootenai Health was one out of three organizations in Idaho to participate in the pilot program for 2024. During the summer of 2024, five nurse interns joined Kootenai Health to work alongside nurse preceptors and perform nursing skills approved by the IBON. Five out of five nurse interns accepted nursing positions upon graduation for 2025!

Nurse Fellowship Program:

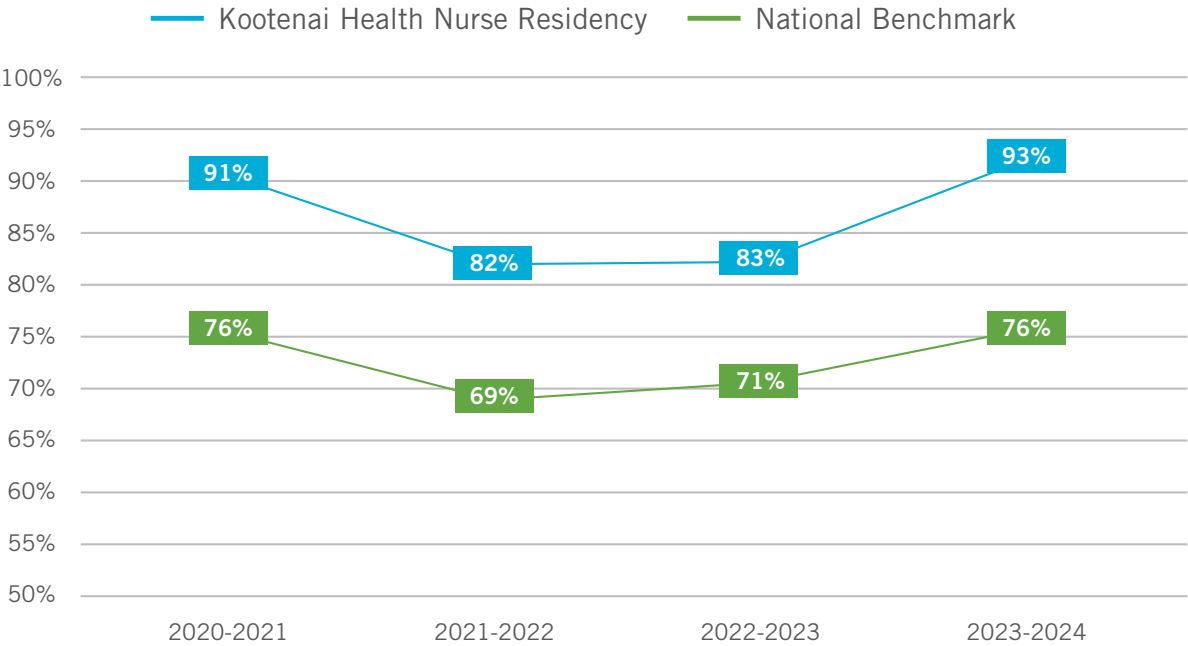
Kootenai Health Nurse Fellowship program provides support to experienced nurses transitioning into a new practice setting by ensuring nurses are offered an expanded clinical learning experience to build confidence and competence in their practice. During 2024, there were nurse fellowships in the following departments, Emergency, Labor and Delivery, Women’s and Children’s Operations, Operating Room, and Critical Care.

Nurse Residency Program:

The Kootenai Health Nurse Residency program is accredited with distinction as a Practice Transition Program by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. In 2024, 93 nurse residents joined Kootenai Health in over 18 different workplace settings. The retention rate for nurse residents in 2024 was 93% compared to the national first year nurse retention rate of 76%.



Nurse Residency First Year Retention



Improving Severe Hypertension Management in Pregnancy

Severe hypertension in pregnancy can lead to life-threatening complications such as eclampsia, stroke, and fetal growth restriction. An internal review at Kootenai Health (KH) from April to August 2022 revealed that only 78% of obstetrical patients with severe hypertension received treatment within the recommended one-hour window, leaving 22% at significant risk. Delays in intervention, limited staff training, and insufficient cross-departmental coordination highlighted the need for a systematic solution.

Implementing the Blue Band Program

To address these gaps, KH introduced the **Blue Band Program** in February 2023, inspired by the California Maternal Quality Care

Collaborative (CMQCC) guidelines. Led by Dr. Robert Milligan and Kim Jorgensen, MBA, BSN, RN, the program included creating educational materials, conducting staff training, and enhancing electronic medical records (EMR) with preeclampsia alerts. The initiative also involved educating Emergency Department (ED) teams and local EMS providers to ensure comprehensive care for hypertensive patients.

Impact and Outcomes

The Blue Band Program significantly improved the timely treatment of severe hypertension, raising compliance from 78% to 90.5% by October 2023. Staff reported better preparedness, and patient feedback highlighted

increased confidence in recognizing and responding to symptoms. Additionally, updated EMR tools and ongoing education efforts ensured sustained progress.

Future Directions

KH plans to expand the Blue Band Program through continuous education, audits, and additional EMR enhancements to further improve maternal and fetal outcomes. These efforts reflect KH's commitment to reducing preventable complications and ensuring the safety of pregnant patients.



Expanding Pain Management Options: Introduction of Nitrous Oxide at Kootenai Health

Kootenai Health’s Family Birth Center recently addressed a significant service gap by introducing nitrous oxide as a pain management option for laboring mothers. This initiative aimed to enhance the birthing experience by offering a non-invasive, self-administered, and effective pain relief method that empowers patients to manage their pain and anxiety during labor. Unlike epidural anesthesia, nitrous oxide allows mothers to retain mobility and does not interfere with the natural progression of labor, aligning with a patient-centered approach to care.

Identifying the Gap

Before this intervention, KH was the only hospital within a 40-mile radius that did not offer nitrous oxide, placing it at a competitive disadvantage. Recognizing this gap, a multidisciplinary workgroup was formed, including Labor and Delivery RNs Laura DeNoma, Julie Moak, Sophia Dicerbo, Amanda Kampf, nurse manager Anna Werner, OB providers, and director Kim Jorgensen. The team’s goal was to improve patient satisfaction by expanding pain management options to align with regional standards of care.

Intervention Details

In January 2024, the team developed a comprehensive project plan that included the following key activities:

- 1. Policy Development:** Created and approved a nitrous oxide policy in collaboration with OB providers, anesthesia providers, and nursing leadership.
- 2. Staff and Patient Education:** Identified nurse champions for both day and night shifts to facilitate training. Amanda Powers, Nursing Education Specialist led training sessions for staff and providers in March 2024.
- 3. EMR Integration:** Worked with IT and EPIC analysts to incorporate documentation and consent forms for nitrous oxide use into the electronic medical records system.
- 4. Patient Resources:** Designed educational brochures detailing the benefits and usage of nitrous oxide, distributed at OB offices and clinics.

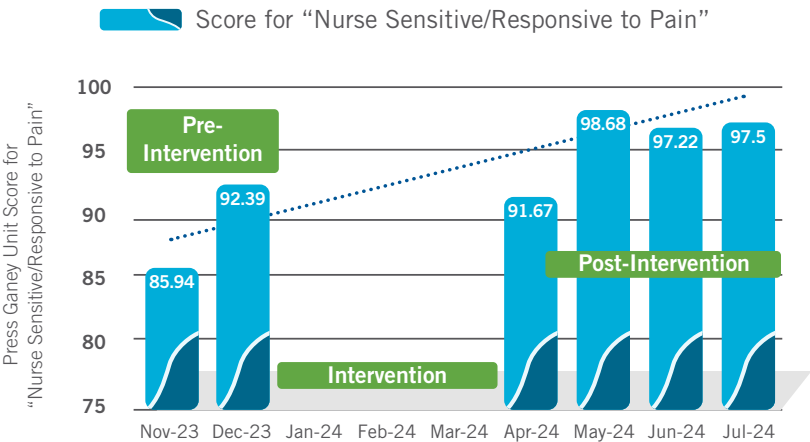
The official launch of nitrous oxide as a pain management option occurred in April, 2024.

Positive Outcomes and Impact

The introduction of nitrous oxide has significantly improved patient satisfaction. Feedback indicates that patients appreciated the ability to manage their pain autonomously without compromising mobility or labor progression.

Kootenai Health Labor and Delivery Department

Patient Score for “Nurse Sensitive/Responsive to Pain”



Advancing Patient Care Through Interprofessional Education: A Collaborative Approach

From March to December 2024, the Interprofessional Education Workgroup, organized by Sara Olsen, MS, RN, NE-BC, Preceptor Resource Nurse (PRRN) Team Manager, led a comprehensive initiative to enhance nursing education and interdisciplinary collaboration. The program focused on three critical areas of patient care: Sepsis, Trauma, and Stroke/Neuro, each delivered in five sessions throughout the year. This effort aimed to improve clinical competencies and strengthen the collaboration between nursing staff and providers in the Emergency Department (ED), Critical Care Unit (CCU), and Progressive Care Unit (PCU).

Comprehensive Educational Offerings

The initiative included 15 educational sessions, structured as follows:

- **Sepsis Education (March – May 2024)** – 5 offerings
- **Trauma Education (June – August 2024)** – 5 offerings
- **Stroke/Neuro Education (September – December 2024)** – 5 offerings

These sessions were meticulously designed and delivered through a collaborative effort involving volunteer nurse facilitators and interdisciplinary professionals. A total of **536 staff members** attended these events, with an engagement rate of **81% in sepsis, 90% in trauma, and 83% in stroke/neuro** sessions. The overall satisfaction score for the interprofessional presentation and case study facilitation exceeded **80%**, demonstrating the effectiveness of this educational approach.



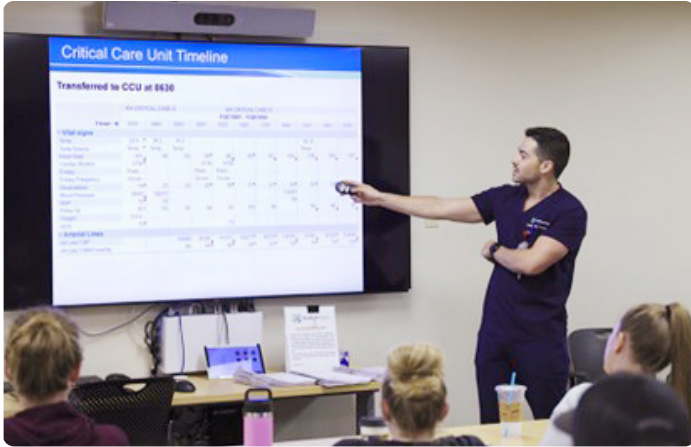
Goals and Objectives of the Interprofessional Education Workgroup

The primary goal of the workgroup was to establish a dynamic learning platform for nursing staff and providers. This platform facilitated the analysis of patient cases, enabling discussions on interdisciplinary roles and opportunities for improvement in key areas such as:

- **Enhancing communication** between providers and nurses
- **Improving skill acquisition** to ensure quality patient outcomes
- **Correlating patient outcomes** with interdisciplinary care
- **Streamlining practice initiatives** for staff efficiency
- **Bringing classroom learning back to the bedside**
- **Consolidating education** to promote work-life balance for health care professionals
- **Connecting training and patient care** with the organization's mission, vision, and values

Support and Impact

This initiative was **strongly supported** by leadership teams, Kelly Espinoza, PhD, RN, Critical Care (CC) Director, Jamie Myler, BSN, RN, CCRN, Emergency Department (ED) Director, Dershi Bussey, BSN, RN, Bailey Camp, CC Manager, Eric Kenner, ED Manager, Jamie Tweedy, PCU Manager, Amanda Pringle, Trauma Program Manager, Kate Oliver, Stroke and STEMI Coordinator, Bailey Camp, Sepsis Coordinator, NES Team, PRRN Team and several providers.



The sessions had a **direct impact on nurses** working in CC, PCU, and ED, equipping them with critical knowledge and skills to improve patient care. Additionally, **39 volunteer nurse facilitators** played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of these sessions, fostering a collaborative and engaging learning environment.

A Transformational Approach to Education

By streamlining mandatory education and focusing on interdisciplinary collaboration, this initiative **reinforced best practices** in patient care while optimizing educational efforts. The success of this program highlights the **importance of integrating education into clinical practice**, ultimately

leading to improved patient outcomes and a more cohesive health care team. Moving forward, the Interprofessional Education Workgroup remains committed to fostering continuous learning and enhancing the synergy between nursing staff and providers to drive excellence in patient care.



Driving Excellence: Kootenai Health's Nursing Governance Elevates Practice and Outcomes

Kootenai Health's Nursing Professional Governance empowers nurses at all levels to actively shape clinical practice, patient care, and workplace policies. Rooted in shared decision-making, this model fosters collaboration, professional development, and continuous quality improvement. Through Unit Practice Councils (UPCs) and specialty councils, nurses drive evidence-based initiatives, enhance patient outcomes, and create a supportive work environment. By engaging frontline staff in leadership and innovation, Nursing Professional Governance strengthens Kootenai Health's commitment to excellence in nursing and patient-centered care.

Throughout 2024, Kootenai's Unit Practice Councils (UPCs) actively contributed to improving nursing practice, patient care, and workplace efficiency. Various councils focused on unit-specific challenges and enhancements, leading to measurable successes across the organization.

Key Achievements:

- **Nursing Work Environment:** Introduced the Sunshine Award, expanded DAISY celebrations, and enhanced collaboration with security to improve staff safety and workflow efficiency.
- **Night Shift Council:** Addressed night shift-specific concerns, improved documentation processes, developed a Pre-Op SmartPhrase for better communication, and facilitated pain management education.
- **Kootenai Clinic Nursing Practice Council:** Focused on increasing hand hygiene compliance, enhancing continuing education participation, and revising key nursing policies to improve evidence-based care.
- **Kootenai Clinic Primary Care Council:** Increased participation in the Nurse Excellence Program, expanded certification efforts, improved workflow for medication scanning, and provided quarterly education sessions on evidence-based primary care topics.
- **Youth Acute UPC:** Developed a behavioral plan documentation tool, improved visitation policies, created educational materials for staff, and introduced a Zen Room for team well-being.
- **NICU UPC:** Implemented Angel Eye cameras for improved patient-family connection, enhanced developmental care practices, updated key policies, and successfully hosted a NICU reunion for past patients and families.
- **Preceptor Resource Nurse UPC:** Supported onboarding of 160 RNs, launched mock codes on medical-surgical floors, implemented in-services, created a platform for tracking and elevating staff requests to impact practice, and collaborated to update the preceptor class and policy.
- **NRT Council:** Successfully hired and retained 26 new staff members, established tiered RN levels for improved coverage, and expanded CNA skills training and hybrid roles in wound care and vascular access.



- **1 North UPC:** Hired 22 new staff members, including 16 RNs, reduced falls from 35 in 2023 to 25 in 2024, awarded Team DAISY Award for 2024, improved patient experience scores, winning a Top Improver award.
- **2 East UPC:** Achieved zero hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) in 2024, reduced falls by 61% compared to 2023, members recognized with multiple DAISY and Sunshine Awards.
- **2 South UPC:** Created a Turn Team to reduce caregiver burnout and prevent pressure injuries, achieved 105 days without a patient fall, onboarded 20+ new-graduate RN residents.
- **3 South UPC (Progressive Care Unit):** Improved compliance with HAPI prevention protocols, reducing cases from 13 in 2023 to 5 in 2024, achieved zero CAUTI and C-Diff infections for the second consecutive year, maintained a 90% RN retention rate.



- **3 East UPC:** UPC revitalization plus many enhanced skills and certifications, including 18 chemo-certified RNs, 35 NIHSS-certified nurses, 13 EMU-trained RNs, the graduation of 13 nurse residents, Level 3 EMU accreditation, and five new national certifications earned by staff.
- **Labor and Delivery UPC:** Implemented Nitrous Oxide as a pain relief option for laboring mothers, partnered with Rapid Response for OB Emergency Management training and readiness, developed standardized charting tools to improve documentation accuracy, strengthened bereavement program support for families experiencing fetal loss.

- **Emergency Department UPC:** Launched ED/CC hybrid training program for cross-specialty nursing skills, improved patient experience scores from the 51st to the 69th percentile, implemented an ED reboot project to improve patient flow and reduce hallway bed use.
- **Kootenai Infusion Services (KIS) UPC:** Successfully relocated outpatient paracentesis procedures to KIS, increased Press Ganey Patient satisfaction scores to 92.38%, exceeding the goal of 75%, expanded staff education through interdisciplinary guest speaker sessions.
- **Specialty Procedures Area:** Developed and implemented a post-procedure call process to ensure timely patient support and continuity of care, designated a staff-only bathroom to enhance convenience and promote a more comfortable work environment.
- **1 West UPC:** Established Unit Practice Council in May of 2024, hosted an Open House to provide education on Addiction Recovery Services offered on the unit as well as the Intensive Outpatient Program and Crisis Center.

These achievements highlight the dedication of Kootenai Health nurses to fostering innovation, improving patient safety, and strengthening professional development.

2024 House-Wide Safety Metrics: Prioritizing Nursing-Sensitive Indicators for High-Impact Care

2024 House-Wide Quality/Safety Goals

Reporting Period: December 2024

Sources: Press Ganey Database, Midas, NDNQI, NHSN, Power BI - Posted Jan. 2025



Nursing-sensitive indicators are metrics that directly reflect the quality of nursing care and its impact on patient outcomes. These indicators include **patient falls, pressure injuries, infection rates, medication errors, and patient satisfaction**, among others. By tracking these indicators, health care organizations can identify areas where nursing practices significantly influence patient outcomes and target improvement efforts more effectively. Focusing on nursing-sensitive indicators not only enhances **clinical outcomes** but also supports **evidence-based practice**, demonstrating the vital role of nursing in achieving high-quality care.

Focusing improvement efforts on a limited set of **high-impact metrics**—often referred to as “the vital few”—allows health care teams to concentrate resources and energy where they can make the most significant difference. By identifying and prioritizing the vital few indicators that most strongly affect patient outcomes, such as **fall prevention or infection control**, nursing teams can implement targeted interventions with greater efficiency and effectiveness. This approach not only prevents staff burnout from addressing too many priorities at once but also facilitates **clear goal setting, streamlined workflows, and measurable progress**. Ultimately, concentrating on the vital few nursing-sensitive indicators supports **sustainable quality improvement**, enhances patient safety, and aligns with organizational goals for superior care.

Advancing Age-Friendly Care: NICHE Committee's 2024 Achievements and Future Vision

Empowering Caregivers Through Education

One of the highlights of 2024 was the successful administration of the Julie and Dave Levine Scholarship, which supported continuing education for both registered nurses (RNs) and non-RN staff, including Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs). Three RNs completed the Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) certification, each receiving \$725 toward their continuing education, totaling 14.5 hours of advanced geriatric care training. Additionally, eight CNAs and CMAs completed the Geriatric Patient Care Associate (GPCA) certification, receiving \$225 for CNAs and \$275 for CMAs, covering 11 hours of specialized education. This investment in workforce development not only enhances the skills of direct care providers but also aligns with the organization's broader commitment to Age-Friendly care.

Fostering Engagement and Professional Development

The NICHE Committee made significant progress in fostering staff engagement and professional development. A key goal for 2024 was to improve NICHE team meeting attendance to an average of at least eight staff members per month. Impressively, the committee achieved an average monthly attendance of 13.67, reflecting the growing interest and commitment among staff to improve geriatric care practices. Additionally, the committee aimed to expand the GRN and GPCA learning paths to seven more staff members across the organization, further building a network of geriatric care experts.

Enhancing Knowledge Sharing and Education

Knowledge dissemination was another area where the NICHE Committee excelled in 2024. With a goal to offer quarterly newsletters and educational opportunities providing 0.5 Continuing Education (CE) credits during NICHE meetings, the committee surpassed expectations by delivering two CE opportunities featuring NICHE member presenters. These sessions provided valuable insights into geriatric care best practices, supporting continuous learning and reinforcing the importance of age-sensitive care approaches.

NICHE Moments: Are moments that matter within health care settings, where we are able to apply our NICHE focus to improve a patient's experience.

- Linda Henrich, DNP, RN, CHFN, GERO-BC, NPD-BC, CEN.



BLS Mock Codes

A Code Blue in the inpatient unit signals a medical emergency in which a patient has stopped breathing or their heart has stopped beating, requiring immediate intervention. Timely response is critical, and inpatient nurses must act quickly and efficiently to execute life-saving interventions. However, many inpatient nurses encounter these situations infrequently and are only required to renew their Basic Life Support (BLS) certification every two years, which may lead to skill degradation over time.

Recognizing gaps in BLS skills, the Code Blue Committee partnered with the Center for Nursing Excellence to implement bedside BLS mock codes during shifts. The primary goal for the first year was to enhance confidence, knowledge, and performance within the first three minutes of a Code Blue. Key metrics targeted for improvement included:

1. Activating a Code Blue
2. Initiating CPR
3. Defibrillating the patient

The process was piloted in the Progressive Care Unit (PCU) in February 2024 and later expanded to Acute Care and Critical Care units in April and August. Trained Preceptor Resource Nurses (PRNs) coordinated with charge nurses to assess unit availability before conducting mock codes. They set up CPR manikins in empty rooms, ran 3-minute simulations, evaluated key actions, and debriefed staff. PRNs recorded performance metrics such as CPR quality, time to activate a Code Blue, and defibrillator pad placement. Staff were encouraged to engage hands-on with equipment and practice techniques that felt unfamiliar.

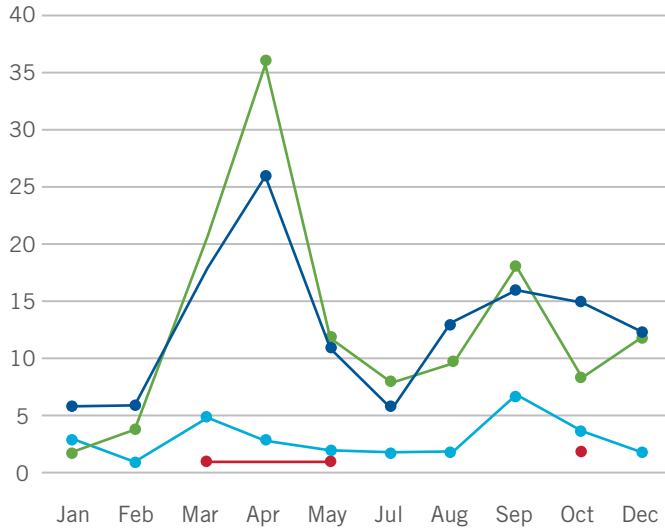
The mock codes were optional and open to all unit staff, including Health Unit Coordinators, Certified Nursing Assistants, and students. Each session lasted approximately 15 minutes, making participation feasible within busy workflows. After each session, staff completed an evaluation rating their confidence, knowledge, and skills before and after the activity.

In 2024, 164 mock codes were conducted hospital-wide, significantly improving staff performance. Post-intervention data revealed remarkable results, with Acute Care units achieving zero Code Blue fallouts for the first time in years. Confidence among staff increased substantially, along with improved knowledge and skill retention. These findings highlight the effectiveness of practicing life-saving skills in a realistic setting to enhance response times and overall patient outcomes.

Looking ahead, BLS mock codes will continue in 2025 with a focus on refining CPR quality, defibrillation techniques, and team coordination to further improve emergency response readiness. - **Mariah Toms**

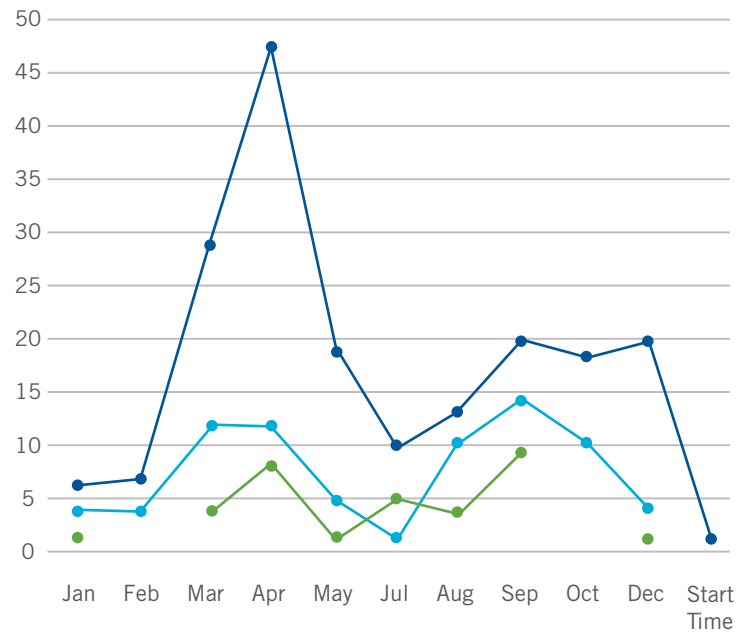
Knowledge/Skill Before Activity

- Advanced - I could teach someone this skill
- Basic - I would need prompting or assistance
- Intermediate - I could perform independently
- No knowledge



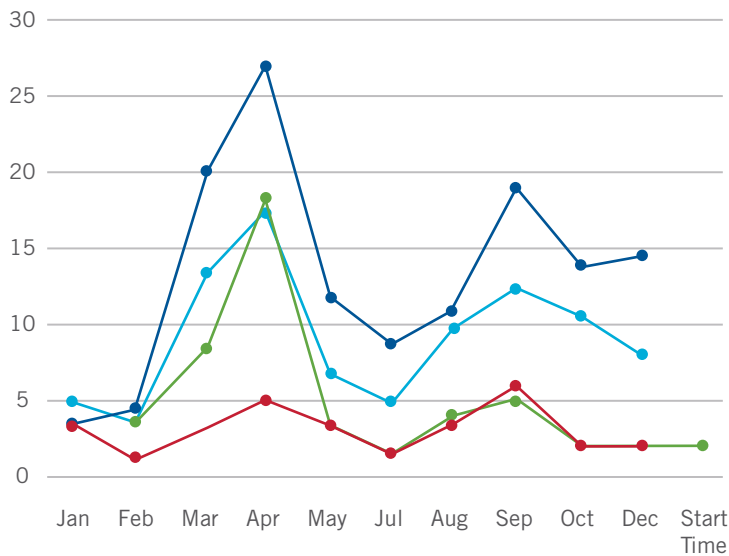
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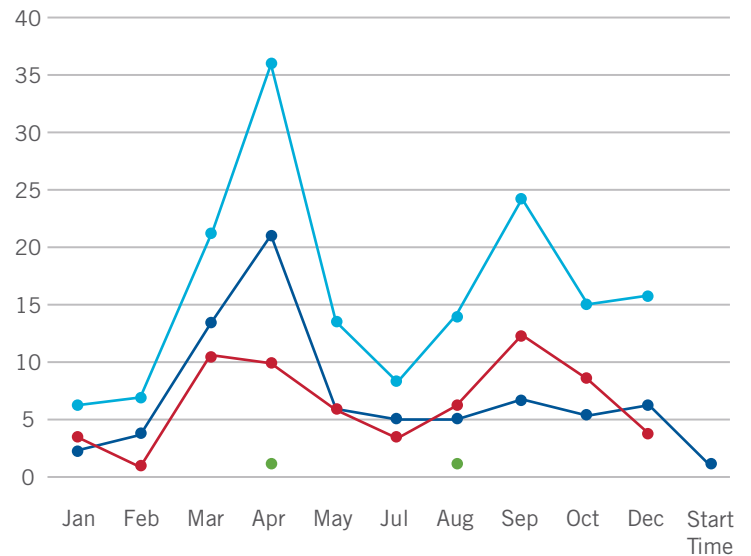
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- No knowledge



Confidence After Activity

- Advanced - I could teach someone this skill
- Basic - I would need prompting or assistance
- Intermediate - I could perform independently



Kootenai Health Partners with North Idaho Advanced Care Hospital to Improve Dialysis Services

At the start of 2024, North Idaho Advanced Care Hospital (NIACH) faced a significant challenge when they lost their contract with US Renal, leaving them unable to accept acute patients requiring hemodialysis. This gap in service led to prolonged hospital stays for dialysis patients, who remained admitted until they were stable enough for discharge to rehabilitation facilities or home. As a result, Kootenai Health experienced financial losses due to delayed discharges, and hospital bed availability was significantly impacted.

To address this issue, Kootenai Health collaborated with NIACH to develop a new contract that would allow Kootenai Health's dialysis staff to perform treatments for acute patients at NIACH. Once the contract was approved, Kootenai quickly moved forward by training several of their staff members to provide dialysis services at the NIACH facility. In February, the partnership saw its first dialysis patients successfully treated at NIACH.

The dialysis staffing plan initially involved assigning one nurse each day to manage treatments for NIACH patients, with a maximum of two dialysis sessions per day. However, when patient needs exceeded this limit, staffing was promptly adjusted to ensure all necessary treatments were completed.

This new arrangement has proven beneficial for both facilities. NIACH patients now have access to essential dialysis services on-site, while Kootenai Health has been able to expedite the safe discharge of dialysis patients, reducing financial losses and freeing up hospital beds for incoming patients. This partnership demonstrates a successful model of inter-facility collaboration aimed at enhancing patient care and operational efficiency. - **Juanita Johnson**

Enhancing Access to Behavioral Health Outpatient Care

In response to the growing need for psychiatric services in our community, Kootenai Clinic Internal Medicine in Post Falls, has integrated a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) into its service line. However, building a strong patient base has presented challenges, including a high no-show rate and an influx of referrals that are not suited for psychiatric care. With the closure of Kootenai Clinic Outpatient Psychiatry in 2022, many patients were left searching for specialized care, and primary care providers—though essential in managing psychiatric needs—often lack the expertise required for comprehensive psychiatric medication management.

To bridge this gap, our clinic has identified a key strategy to enhance access: incorporating a triage nurse into the referral and scheduling process. Traditionally, office support staff have handled new patient appointments, but they may lack the clinical insight necessary to properly assess urgency and fit for psychiatric services. By leveraging the expertise of a triage nurse with a background in behavioral health and inpatient psychiatric care, we can:

- Prioritize patients with high symptom acuity for timely appointments.
- Facilitate outreach to patients who may be hesitant to initiate treatment.
- Redirect referrals to appropriate counseling services when psychiatric care is not needed.
- Improve overall patient-provider alignment, ensuring the PMHNP's skills are utilized effectively.

This strategic shift not only improves patient access to care but also enhances provider satisfaction and optimizes clinic operations. By utilizing clinical expertise at the initial point of contact, we foster a more efficient, patient-centered approach to outpatient behavioral health services. Moving forward, this model can serve as a foundation for further innovations in psychiatric care access at Kootenai Health. - **Elaina Rose DiMarco**

RN-Led Wellness Visits Enhance Preventative Care and Maximize Nursing Expertise

Kootenai Health has introduced RN-led Annual Wellness Visits (AWVs) to help achieve its goal of 70% completion for Medicare patients. This initiative addresses challenges posed by high patient volumes and a shortage of primary care providers by enabling registered nurses to work at the top of their license. These visits focus on promoting health and preventing illness rather than treating acute or chronic conditions, allowing nurses to fully utilize their clinical expertise and organizational autonomy.



**Kara Baron,
MSN, RN, RN-BC**

At Kootenai Clinic, RN Care Managers like Kara Baron, MSN, RN, RN-BC, play a crucial role in conducting AWVs. Kara independently manages scheduling, conducts comprehensive health risk assessments, reviews care gaps, and offers personalized education on wellness and lifestyle modifications. She also ensures that appropriate screenings and follow-up tests are ordered, allowing physicians to focus on managing complex and acute cases. Kara's ability to practice at the top of her license not only enhances her professional satisfaction but also significantly improves patient outcomes and access to care.

RN-led AWVs have been met with appreciation from both patients and providers. By addressing care gaps such as immunizations and advanced directives and ensuring that medical records are up to date, these visits empower patients to take an active role in their health. Additionally, this model helps streamline care delivery by freeing up physician time, demonstrating the value of leveraging nursing expertise to enhance preventative care and promote community wellness. This approach not only aligns with Kootenai's goals for improving access to preventative care but also highlights the vital role of nursing in managing population health. By maximizing the skills and knowledge of registered nurses, Kootenai is setting a standard for innovative care delivery that benefits both patients and the broader health care system.



New and Improved Inpatient Nursing SharePoint Enhances Workflow and Collaboration

Kootenai Health's Nursing Division has successfully completed the transition to a new and improved Inpatient Nursing SharePoint platform. The upgraded site streamlines communication, optimizes workflows, and enhances access to resources for nursing staff. Led by the Nursing Division SharePoint Transition Workgroup, including leaders from nursing, IT, and communications, the project merged two underutilized SharePoint sites and eliminated the need for other platforms that previously caused communication gaps and inefficiencies.

"The new Nursing SharePoint has merged the existing clinical and nursing admin sites into one, easy-to-navigate platform," said Sara Olsen, MS, BSN, RN, NE-BC. "We want to ensure that real-time information is shared seamlessly among our teams, and I'm really proud of what our team has accomplished."

The platform now includes dedicated subsites for each specialty area, providing centralized resources and support for nursing staff. Key areas like the Nursing Division Homepage and the Center for Nursing Excellence are also accessible, making it easier for nurses to find essential information quickly.

Ongoing improvements will continue based on staff feedback. Team members are encouraged to reach out to the Center for Nursing Excellence @ KH-NursingExcellence@kh.org with any questions or suggestions. By offering a unified and user-friendly platform, the new SharePoint has significantly improved collaboration and supports nursing staff in delivering high-quality patient care.



Expanding Access to Inpatient Psychiatric Care at Kootenai Behavioral Health

Amid growing regional need for inpatient psychiatric services, Kootenai Behavioral Health (KBH) recognized a pressing opportunity to expand its Adult Psychiatric Intensive Psychiatric Unit (IPU). In November 2023, the unit increased from six to eight beds, and by June 2024 expanded again to twelve. These efforts allowed Kootenai Health to serve more individuals experiencing acute behavioral health crises, many of whom would otherwise face delays in care or require treatment outside their communities.

Addressing Safety Concerns During Expansion

Prior to the expansion, staff voiced concerns about patient and staff safety due to the unit's history of clinical violence events. In early 2023, the average number of violent events per 1,000 patient days was 5.67. To responsibly increase capacity, team members collaborated to explore safe, evidence-based models of care that would support both patients and health care workers. A multidisciplinary team designed interventions that would enhance safety and promote efficient care delivery while increasing bed availability.

Implementing Safety-Focused Changes

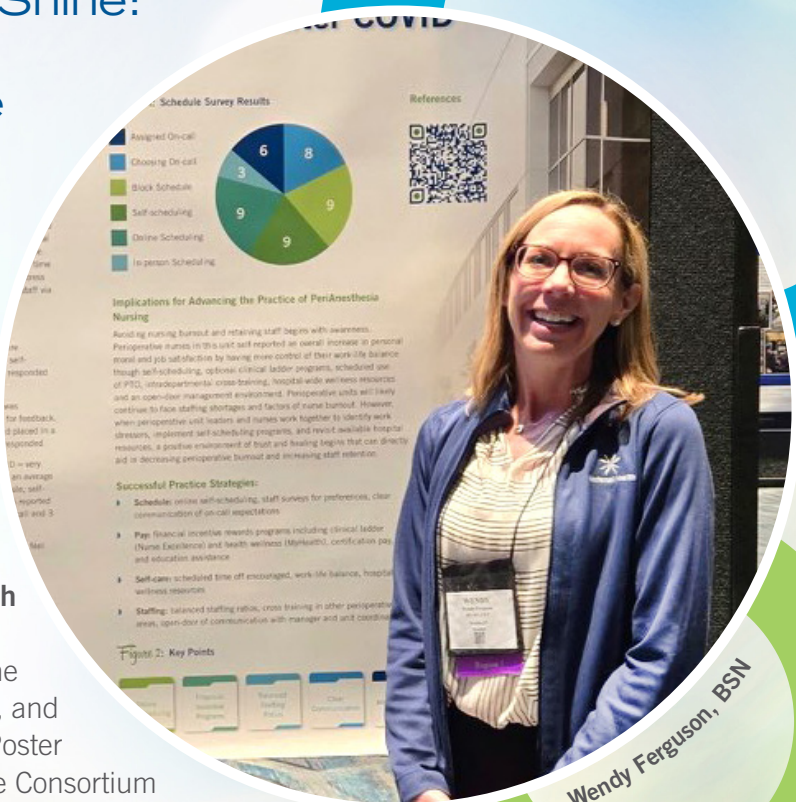
In November of 2023, KBH introduced a 24/7 security staffing model and implemented a paired-care system that required two team members to provide care together in high-risk areas of the unit. These changes were based on proven strategies shown to reduce workplace violence in psychiatric settings. By integrating these workflows into daily operations, KBH ensured the environment remained safe and supportive despite the rising patient census.

Measurable Impact on Access and Care Quality

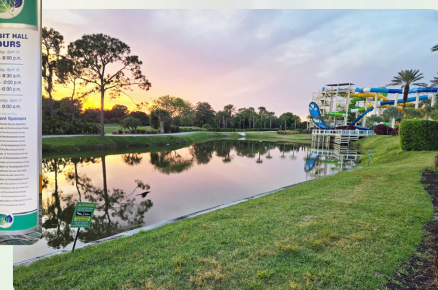
Following these interventions, the Adult Psychiatric Unit expanded its ability to accept behaviorally complex patients while significantly improving staff safety. The average number of violent events decreased from 5.67 to 2.83 per 1000 patient days by the end of 2024, demonstrating the success of targeted changes such as round-the-clock security presence and the paired-care model. This initiative effectively balanced improved access to essential mental health care with enhanced safety for care teams.

Kootenai Health Nurses Shine: Conference Posters and Presentations Showcase

- Expansion of a Telehealth Program to Improve Access to MS Specialty Care to Rural and Underserved Areas in the Inland Northwest.** Nina Bozinov, Kaelianne Newbold, Katherine Gwin, and R. Chase Cullen, Neurology, Kootenai Clinic, - Poster Presentation at 2024 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC).
- Longitudinal Analysis of Patient Reported Outcome Measures in MS Patients on High Efficacy Therapy: Real World Attempt to Capture Disability Accumulation.** Kaelianne Newbold, Katherine Gwin, R. Chase Cullen, and Nina Bozinov, Neurology, Kootenai Clinic, Poster Presentation at 2024 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC).
- Experience with Utilization of SymptoMScreen in Routine Clinical Care and Evaluation of Results of Neurologic Domain Scores.** Katherine Gwin, Kaelianne Newbold, R. Chase Cullen, and Nina Bozinov, Neurology, Kootenai Clinic, Poster Presentation at 2024 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC).
- Identifying Variables Contributing to Obesity in Multiple Sclerosis Patients and the Potential Role of GLP-1 Agonists.** R. Chase Cullen, Katherine Gwin, Kaelianne Newbold, Autumn Ramsrud, Nicole Dooda, Tyler Cress, Cindy Smith, Brittany Craft, Angie Critchfield, and Nina Bozinov, Neurology, Kootenai Clinic, Poster Presentation at 2024 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC).
- Evaluation of Baseline Clinical and Demographic Characteristics in MS Patients Based on Current DMT Use.** Autumn Ramsrud, R. Chase Cullen, Katherine Gwin, Kaelianne Newbold, Nicole Dooda, Tyler Cress, Cindy Smith, Brittany Craft, Angie Critchfield, and Nina Bozinov. Poster presentation at 2024 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC).
- Emerging from Burnout: Keeping Nurses Engaged After COVID.** Wendy Ferguson, BSN, RN, CEN. Poster presentation at 2024 The Northwest PeriAnesthesia Nurses' Association (NPANA) Fall conference.



Wendy Ferguson, BSN



- Empowering New Nurses: Strengthening Communication Confidence with SBAR.** Roxanne Gadberry, MSN, RN, CMSRN, NPD-BC, Maura Cash, MSN, RN, CMSRN, NPD-BC, Teresa Davis, MSN, RN, CNOR. Poster Presentation at LEAP Conference in September 2024.
- Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Individuals with Type 2 Diabetes: A Quality Improvement Program.** Lynne Kinson and Kim Inman. Article Published in Clinical Diabetes, available online November 2024, in print January 2025.
- Hope in Blue: Combating Preeclampsia's Impact on Maternal and Neonatal Well-being.** Amanda Powers, BSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM. Podium Presentation at LEAP North Conference in September 2024.
- Innovative Application for Sepsis Education.** Oksana Abrosimov, BSN, RN, CCRN. Podium Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Nurturing Nurses: Cultivating an Evidence Based Wellbeing Program from the Ground Up.** Audrey Kuetemeyer, MSN, RN, PMH-BC, NPD-BC. Podium Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Transforming a Health Care Organization Post Pandemic Through a Multi-pronged Approach Impacting Patient Outcomes, Financial Recovery, & Workforce Stabilization.** Kelly Espinoza, Ph.D., RN, Alida Lorenz, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Lori Moss, MS, RN. Podium Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Incorporating Safety and Quality Initiatives into Bedside Nursing Practice.** Shirley L. Miller, BSN, RN, CCRN. Poster Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Creating a Pathway for Change: The Preceptor Resource Nurse Role.** Sara Olsen MS, BSN, RN, NE-BC. Podium Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.



- A Collaborative Partnership to Transform Critical Care Orientation.** Shannon Kline, MSN, RN, CPAN, NPD-BC, Wendy Roller, BSN, RN, CCRN. Podium presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Data Driving Pipeline: The Allocation of Students.** Gina McCloskey, MSN, RN. Poster Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Improving Diabetic Control with Continuous Glucose Monitoring and Medication Management Multi-Disciplinary Team Approach.** Lynne Kinson, MS, BSN, RN. Poster Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Improving Nurse Knowledge and Self Efficacy in the Reduction of Central Line Associated Bloodstream Infections Using Simulation: A Quality Improvement Project.** David Wilson, DNP, ARNP, FNP-C. Poster Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Demystifying Nurse Professional Development Consultations.** Natalie Stanton, MSN, RN, CMSRN, NPD-BC. Poster Presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.
- Health Care Screening Barriers to Non-physical Intimate Partner Violence Against Females from Rural Fundamental Microcultures: A Feasibility Study.** Andrea Christine Collins, BSN, RN. Poster presentation at LEAP North Conference, September 2024.

Kootenai Health Epilepsy Monitoring Unit: Advancing Regional

Kootenai Health has made a significant stride in epilepsy care by achieving certification as a Level 3 Epilepsy Center. This designation, driven by the Neurology/Epilepsy Clinic, the Neurodiagnostic team, and the 3E Nursing team, enhances access to specialized epilepsy care for patients in the region.

Impact on Regional Epilepsy Care

Prior to this achievement, the closest Level 3 Epilepsy Centers were located in Seattle and Boise, necessitating extensive travel for patients in need of advanced epilepsy treatment. With Kootenai Health now recognized as a Level 3 Epilepsy Center, more patients have been referred to Kootenai Neurology and the inpatient Epilepsy Monitoring Unit (EMU). As a result, the volume of EMU patients has nearly doubled, and the hospital has experienced wait times of up to six weeks for admission into the EMU.

Commitment to Excellence in Epilepsy Care

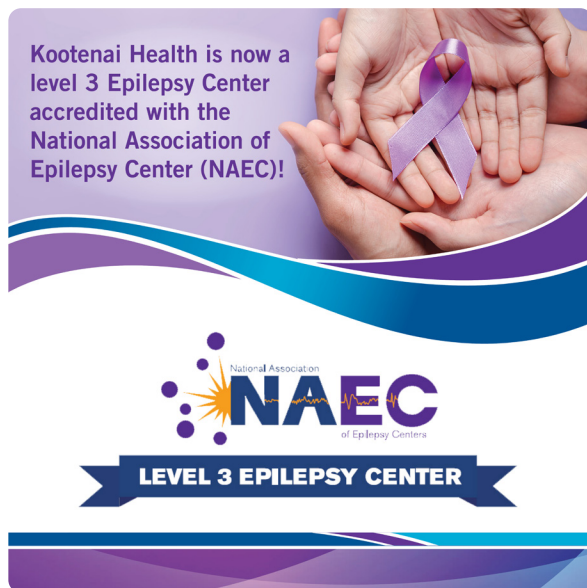
Achieving Level 3 certification required extensive efforts from the 3E Nursing team. All nurses on 3East are required to participate in EMU simulation training focused on patient safety and seizure recognition. This training equips them to serve as “EMU Buddies,” supporting primary EMU nurses. Nurses who advance to become primary EMU nurses undergo additional rigorous training, which includes:

- Completion of an advanced competency for EMU, entailing three days of on-the-job training.
- Review of the peer-reviewed journal Evidence-Based Epilepsy Care.
- Completion of EMU Caring: Safety in the Epilepsy Monitoring Unit by the American Epilepsy Society.
- At least one RN per year must complete the Certificate Program for the Seizure and Epilepsy Healthcare Professional in a Comprehensive Epilepsy Center by the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses. Currently, two nurses have completed this course, with a third in progress.

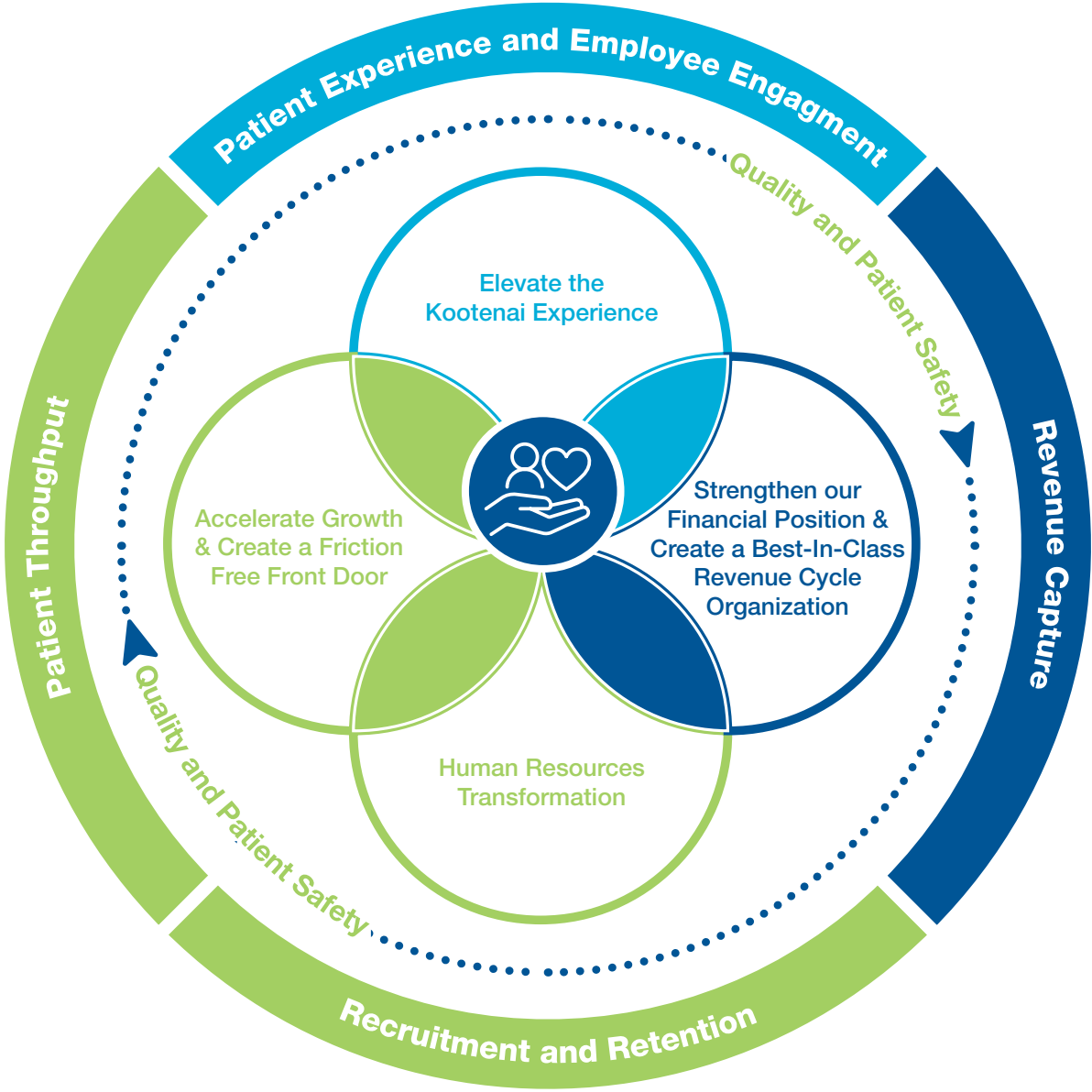
Expanding Access for Patients

The impact of Kootenai Health’s Level 3 designation extends beyond Idaho. The facility is now treating a growing number of patients from Montana, where there is currently no practicing Epileptologist. Patients who once had to travel significant distances can now receive expert care closer to home.

By achieving this milestone, Kootenai Health is not only elevating the standard of epilepsy care within its own institution but also filling a critical gap in specialized care for the entire region. The dedication of the Neurology/Epilepsy Clinic, the Neurodiagnostic team, and the 3E Nursing team continues to drive excellence in epilepsy treatment, ensuring that patients receive the highest level of care possible.



2024 Nursing and Clinical Enterprise Strategic Priorities



KOOTENAI HEALTH WAY

The foundational values that define us

Safety Compassion Engagement

Vision

One
connected team,
boldly transforming the health care
experience, to become a **premier medical destination**.

Mission

We **improve health** one patient at a time
in a friendly and **professional culture**
committed to superior
quality and **safety**.



KootenaiHealth