

**Beyond Boundaries:
A Model for Boosting Staff Retention and Morale Through Career Mobility**

Team Leader: Tiffany N. Hughes MBA

Team Members: Robert Ghafar RTT MBA, Abigail Caudle MD MHCM FACS,
Jenise Rice MSN RN-CPAN

MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX

Abstract Background Information: Retention and morale directly affect patient safety, staff well-being, and organizational resilience. In perianesthesia care, where teamwork is essential, turnover disrupts continuity and quality. At MD Anderson Cancer Center, rising turnover and employee disengagement were linked to unclear career development pathways. Recognizing that retention is a strategic imperative, the Division of Procedural and Therapeutic Operations launched a Career Mobility Model to provide transparent, structured advancement opportunities.

Objectives of Project: The program aimed to: (1) increase transparency in career pathways, (2) equip leaders to conduct supportive career conversations, (3) empower employees to own their career trajectory, and (4) strengthen morale and retention through visible growth opportunities.

Process of Implementation: Key components included mapping 129 job titles into vertical and lateral career lattices, identifying advancement criteria, creating manager/employee toolkits, embedding career discussions into performance reviews, and launching a “Walk-A-Mile” shadowing program. A continuous feedback loop ensured adaptability and sustainability.

Statement of Successful Practice: Post-implementation, manager confidence in career discussions increased by 22%, employee awareness of opportunities rose in engagement surveys, and the shadowing program led to multiple role transitions and mentorship connections. Sustained participation in development resources reinforced the program’s credibility.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: This model demonstrates that structured career mobility frameworks can address retention challenges in high-acuity settings. For perianesthesia nursing, transparent pathways and experiential learning strengthen team resilience, foster psychological safety, and reduce turnover-related disruptions. By embedding career mobility into practice, organizations can support professional growth, improve morale, and ensure the stability needed to deliver safe, high-quality perioperative care.