

MEN IN NURSING PROJECT

SUCCESS STORIES

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Introduction: The Men in Nursing project was initiated in 2007 after it was discovered that male nursing students had higher than normal attrition rates. The project commenced with a meeting held with the male students to identify issues affecting success. Subsequently monthly meetings were held with first and second year male students and male RNs, several who had completed the program. The group addressed topics and issues identified by the students – such as concerns about touching patients, communication challenges in female dominated profession etc. The sessions were led by a licensed clinical social worker who was contracted to implement the project. He was available to male students who wished to discuss any issues that concerned them that might impact their success. A male study group was formed, the group planned social events and made recommendations regarding system issues that were addressed by administration and faculty.

Success has been demonstrated in many ways. One outcome of the project was to increase the male students' feeling of connection with each other and the school. Another was to create a framework of thinking about success in which men felt more comfortable identifying problems or barriers to success early on, identify opportunities to get help and to make use of assistance. Utilizing male RN's who served as informal mentors provided positive models for students in developing their individual unique role as a male RN. A side benefit was the creation of a support system that encouraged honest discussion, acceptance of unique differences experienced by men within the field and willingness to utilize resources available to contribute to their success within the program.

The following are examples of individual student stories that demonstrate impact of the Men in Nursing project on improving the success of male students.

Student #1: First year male student spoke with director stating he was considering dropping out. Primary issue was that his wife and family were "giving me a hard time about being a nurse". He felt that perhaps this profession was not appropriate for a man if this was the kind of feedback he was to receive. This student became part of the Men in Nursing meetings and began discussing his concerns about the role of RN. He decided to remain in the program, became active in discussion groups and eventually offered to be speaker at Diversity Conference, along with another student and MIN project staff. He graduated a year ago, is now working at a local hospital and has continued participating in MIN meetings, sharing his experiences with students.

Student #2: First year male student was disciplined at his job at a local hospital where he did his clinical rotation for telling “dirty jokes” to female RN’s . Faculty at nursing school was contacted and it was suggested he speak with the MIN consultant. Discussion regarding appropriate behavior for men in clinical settings became both a topic that he brought up in the meetings but also with the consultant. RN’s within the MIN group led discussion on professional behavior, appropriate communication strategies. This student had been on probation but graduated successfully last year and is now working as RN.

Student #3: Second year male student participated in discussion within MIN group about “tackling issues and problems head on”, the wisdom of identifying needs and asking for appropriate assistance as a characteristic of successful people rather than “doing it all by yourself”.. After session, student asked to speak with director and consultant. Stated he had not been sleeping for several nights, was very worried that he would “never get my RN license”. Acknowledged that he had had misdemeanor charge for marijuana possession 7 years prior and had become obsessed with worry over whether this would prevent him from becoming licensed. Both director and consultant offered to write letters to board of nursing. He came back a few days later thanking them and saying he was able to get back to studying and move on – was very pleased with himself that he had dealt with this “head on”. Upon graduation he was approved to sit for the licensure exam, and is now an RN.

Student #4: Male student asked to speak with consultant. Explained that he had previously attended another school of nursing and had to drop out. Now he was seriously considering dropping out again due to financial and family issues. Student’s wife had been cut back on her hours at work which left him needing to work more hours himself. Stated they have four sons and they were having problems in school. Their financial difficulties left them unable to pay basic bills. Director was able to identify a donor to the nursing school who was willing to present student with a check to help through this crisis. Student met with donor to express his appreciation and was able to continue in school. He has now started second year.

Student #5: Faculty referred first year student to consultant to discuss problems related to student’s inability to successfully complete pediatric clinical rotation skills test. Faculty reported that she was considering failing the student. Student was able to discuss factors that resulted in “performance anxiety” and stress that he felt when performing skills. Was able to develop a plan to increase his feeling in control and improve his confidence. As a result he was able to pass his clinical rotation and completed first year. He has expressed interest in continuing to meet with consultant this year as strategy to maintain his success.

Submitted by Deb Schulte RN, EdD, director Maurine Church Coburn School of Nursing

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