

2025

The Institute for
Nursing Excellence
Annual Report



RWJBarnabas
HEALTH

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RWJ Barnabas HEALTH

SQUIER HALL





Mary Beth Russell

PhD, MA, RN, NPDA-BC, NEA-BC, FNAP, CPHQ, CNE®

Senior Vice President, The Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research and The Institute for Nursing Excellence

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Annual Report of The Institute for Nursing Excellence at RWJBarnabas Health. This past year represents a period of remarkable growth, innovation, and achievement, reflecting our commitment to preparing, supporting and advancing nurses across the continuum of practice.

The expanded footprint at Fort Monmouth stands as a defining milestone, bringing together academic preparation, onboarding, simulation and lifelong professional development in a shared, state-of-the-art environment. This growth strengthens our ability to address workforce needs, support interprofessional collaboration, and ensure consistent, high-quality preparation for nurses systemwide.

Our achievements in transitions to practice, including ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program® Accreditation with Distinction, outstanding nurse residency outcomes and a robust student nurse externship program, underscore our dedication to supporting nurses at critical moments in their professional journeys. Recognition for our simulation programs, including provisional accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare™ and national acknowledgment by Becker's Hospital Review, further affirms the impact of our work on clinical excellence and patient safety.

None of this progress would be possible without the expertise, passion and collaboration of our nursing professional development practitioners and specialists, leaders and partners across the system. I am deeply grateful for their commitment and proud of the national recognition, scholarly contributions and measurable outcomes highlighted in this report.

As we look ahead, The Institute for Nursing Excellence remains focused on innovation, evidence-based practice, and the continued advancement of nursing excellence in service of our patients, communities and profession.

Sincerely,
Mary Beth Russell

Meet the Team



Joseph Cagliostro
MSN, RN, NPD-BC,
MEDSURG-BC, CMSRN
*Nursing Professional
Development Specialist,
Medical Surgical*



Michelle Dickerson
PhDc, RNC-NIC, C-ELBW,
RNC-MNN, C-EFM,
NPD-BC, CBC
*Nursing Professional
Development Specialist,
Perinatal and NICU
ANCC Accredited Provider
Program Director*



Michelle Eaton
DNP, RN, NPD-BC
Manager



Marybeth Gartland
MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CCRN
Manager



Danielle Hilliard
MSN, APN, CPNP,
NPD-BC, CCRN
*Director of Nursing Excellence,
Innovation & Clinical Transitions*



Evan Holtz
MBA, MSN, RN, NPD-BC,
NE-BC, CHSE, CHSOS
*Director, The Institute
for Nursing Excellence*



Mary Koch
MSN, RN, NPD-BC,
CNOR, ANEF
*Administrative Director,
Perioperative Education*



Kevin Kurzweil
BS, MICP, CHSE, CHSOS
Director of Simulation



Arvee Lopez
MSN, RN, NPD-BC,
MEDSURG-BC, CMSRN
*Nursing Professional
Development Specialist,
Behavioral Health*



Michael Sanacore
MSN, RN, CEN
*Nursing Professional
Development Practitioner,
Emergency Department*



Swapnil Shah
DNP, AGACNP-BC,
APN, NPD-BC, CCRN
*Nursing Professional
Development Specialist,
Critical Care*



Katarzyna "Kasia" Wolan
MSN, RN, CEN, CCRN,
CPEN, CTRN
*Nursing Professional
Development Practitioner,
Pediatrics*

Squier Hall at Fort Monmouth



RWJBarnabas Health marked a significant milestone in its commitment to nursing excellence with the expansion of its Oceanport campus at Fort Monmouth, now home to The Institute for Nursing Excellence and the RWJBarnabas Health School of Nursing. This state-of-the-art facility in Squier Hall brings together academic preparation and lifelong professional development under one roof, reinforcing a systemwide strategy to support nurses from entry into the profession through advanced practice and leadership roles. Designed to meet the evolving needs of the nursing workforce, the expanded campus strengthens RWJBarnabas Health's ability to address New Jersey's projected nursing shortage while advancing innovation, interprofessional education and evidence-based practice across the system.



At the core of the Oceanport campus is The Institute for Nursing Excellence, which serves as a regional hub for systemwide nurse onboarding, foundational education and interprofessional learning. The space supports key programs including Foundations of Nursing, comprehensive nursing orientation and multidisciplinary learning experiences that bring nurses, physicians and allied health professionals together in a shared learning environment. By housing these programs alongside advanced simulation, classroom and collaborative learning spaces, the Institute ensures consistent, high-quality preparation for nurses entering practice while fostering teamwork, clinical competence and professional growth across the continuum of care.





RN New Graduate Residency Program

RWJBarnabas Health achieved Accreditation with Distinction from the American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP®), the highest level of recognition awarded to nurse residency programs nationwide. This prestigious designation affirms the health system's nurse residency program as a national leader in supporting new graduate nurses as they transition into professional practice. The program meets rigorous standards for structure, process, and outcomes, with a strong emphasis on critical thinking, evidence-based practice, leadership development, and the emotional and professional well-being of novice nurses. This recognition reflects the collective efforts of nursing leadership and educators across the system and underscores RWJBarnabas Health's sustained investment in nursing excellence and workforce development.

Available at all RWJBarnabas Health hospitals, the one-year paid nurse residency program provides new graduate registered nurses with a structured, hands-on introduction to the art and science of nursing. Residents are hired directly into specialty areas, paired with trained preceptors and supported through clinical orientation, specialty-specific Foundation Courses, and ongoing professional development, mentorship, and peer support throughout the year. Since its inception, the program has supported hundreds of new nurses in building clinical competence, judgment, and confidence during the critical transition from academia to practice. In 2025 alone, 466 nurse residents entered the program, which continues to demonstrate strong outcomes, including a 92% one-year retention rate and an 87% two-year retention rate for completed cohorts—reinforcing RWJBarnabas Health's position as a premier destination for nurses seeking supportive, innovative and high-performing practice environments.



NOURISH

NOURISH™ (Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support & Health) is a signature orientation program within the Institute for Nursing Excellence's Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research, designed to support newly licensed registered nurses during their transition to professional practice. The program utilizes a dedicated orientation unit that emphasizes supportive teaching and learning, individualized competency-based education and experiential clinical practice guided by dedicated Nursing Professional Development (NPD) Practitioners. Through tailored learning experiences, close peer collaboration, and a strong focus on well-being, NOURISH™ promotes integration into the nursing profession while building competence, confidence and comfort. In 2025, 111 nurses participated in the program, bringing total participation since inception to 272 nurses, reinforcing NOURISH™ as a one-of-a-kind orientation model available only within New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive academic health system.

Student Nurse Externship

Our 2025 Student Nurse Externship Program welcomed 96 nursing students throughout our 14 hospitals across the health system.

Designed to provide hands-on experience and mentorship, the externship offers students a unique opportunity to bridge classroom learning with real-world clinical practice. Over the 8-week program, externs worked side-by-side with system experienced nurses, gaining exposure to a variety of specialties and patient care settings. This program reflects the health system's ongoing commitment to developing the next generation of nursing professionals. Throughout their journey, the externs not only sharpened their skills but also deepened their understanding of compassionate high-quality care that defines RWJBarnabas Health.





The Institute for Nursing Excellence Receives Provisional Accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare™

The Institute for Nursing Excellence™ and its Eisenhower Simulation Center in Livingston, New Jersey, received Provisional Accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare™ (SSH), an internationally recognized gold standard that reflects a strong commitment to delivering high-quality simulation education that supports improved clinical performance and patient outcomes. Opened in December 2023, the Simulation Center successfully demonstrated the robust governance, infrastructure and educational processes required for SSH accreditation, meeting rigorous standards despite not yet having the two full years of outcomes data required for full accreditation; the Institute will be eligible to apply for full accreditation in 2026. This milestone achievement underscores the team's dedication to ensuring nursing professionals receive exceptional simulation-based training, which evidence shows enhances critical thinking, confidence and patient outcomes. The Society for Simulation in Healthcare serves a global community of practice dedicated to advancing the quality and safety of healthcare worldwide.



Becker's Hospital Review Names RWJBarnabas Health to 2025's 64 Simulation and Education Programs to Know List

RWJBarnabas Health was named to Becker's Hospital Review's 64 Simulation and Education Programs to Know list for 2025, recognizing health systems nationwide for excellence in simulation-based education and workforce development. Through The Institute for Nursing Excellence, the health system delivers high-quality, systemwide simulation education using state-of-the-art technology and realistic clinical environments that allow learners to safely practice, refine skills and build confidence. These immersive simulation experiences support standardization of practice, enhance clinical performance and ultimately contribute to improved patient safety and outcomes across the enterprise.



How Simulation Training is Transforming Maternal Care at RWJBarnabas Health

In 2025, simulation-based training solidified its role as a cornerstone of RWJBarnabas Health's strategy to improve maternal care by preparing clinicians for real-world obstetric challenges in a safe, controlled environment. Both Institute for Nursing Excellence locations became equipped with MamaAnne™, an advanced full birthing simulation manikin that enables nurses, physicians and interdisciplinary care teams to practice routine deliveries as well as high-stakes emergencies such as postpartum hemorrhage,

pre-eclampsia and sepsis, thereby enhancing technical skills, teamwork, communication and clinical confidence without patient risk. These efforts, which include obstetrics simulation-based learning challenges and hands-on education events using MamaAnne™, are directly linked to improved readiness and responsiveness in high-pressure maternal care scenarios, ultimately supporting better outcomes for mothers and newborns across the health system.



Publications and Presentations

An Innovative Multisite Approach—The Nursing Orientation Unit for RN Integration, Support, and Health (NOURISH™) Program, Article, Mary Beth Russell and Evan Holtz, Journal for Nurses in Professional Development

The Nursing Professional Development Practitioner's Role as a Simulationist, Article, Evan Holtz, Kevin Kurzweil, and Mary Beth Russell, Journal for Nurses in Professional Development

The Unique Role of the System Nursing Professional Development Leader: Navigating Complexity and Driving System-Wide Excellence, Article, Mary Beth Russell, Journal for Nurses in Professional Development

If we build it, they will come: Creating the framework for specialty practice residency program, Poster Presentation, Danielle Hilliard, ANCC Transition to Practice Conference

Standardizing Simulation Across a Statewide Healthcare System, Podium Presentation, Evan Holtz and Kevin Kurzweil, INACSL25



Team Member Awards

Mary Beth Russell, PhD, MA, RN, NPDA-BC®, NEA-BC, FNAP, CPHQ, CNE - SVP, The Center for Professional Development, Innovation, Research and The Institute for Nursing Excellence received NJBIZ Executive Excellence Award

Evan Holtz, MBA, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, NE-BC, CHSE, CHSOS – Director, The Institute for Nursing Excellence, and **Kevin Kurzweil, BS, MICP, CHSE, CHSOS** – Director of Simulation received the New Jersey Emergency Nurses Association Behind-the-Scenes Award

Katarzyna “Kasia” Wolan, MSN, RN, CEN, CCRN, CPEN, CTRN, EMT - Nursing Professional Development Practitioner, Pediatrics received the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN) 2025 Distinguished CPEN (Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse) Award

Swapnil Shah, DNP, AGACNP-BC, APN, NPD-BC, CCRN - Nursing Professional Development Specialist, Critical Care received NJNLN Nurse Recognition Award

Danielle Hilliard, MSN, APN, CPNP, NPD-BC, CCRN - Director of Nursing Excellence, Innovation, and Clinical Transitions and **Arvee Lopez, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, MEDSURG-BC, CMSRN** - Nursing Professional Development Specialist, Behavioral Health received NJNLN Nurse Educator Daisy Award Nominations





New for 2025

Foundations of Nursing Professional Development (NPD) | 57 learners

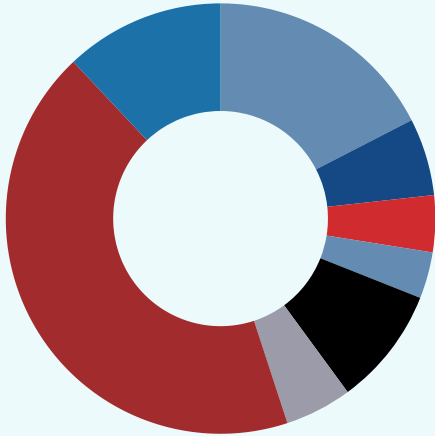
Launched in 2025, the Foundations of Nursing Professional Development course was designed to support nurses transitioning into the NPD role by building core competencies in education, professional development, and system-based practice. Modeled after the success of the “Foundations of Nursing” programs, the course was intentionally developed to promote retention by providing early role clarity, structured support and a strong professional identity. By standardizing foundational NPD education across the system, the program strengthens practice consistency, role confidence and long-term workforce development.

ANCC Contact Hours Awarded | 137,491 systemwide

- **124,133** for courses run by The Institute for Nursing Excellence team

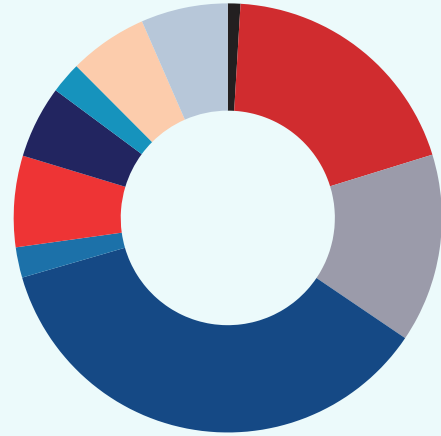
Regional Orientation | 3,587 learners (2,368 nurses and 1,219 ancillary team members)

Certification Review Courses | 258 learners



- Critical Care Nursing Review Course - 45
- Electronic Fetal Monitoring Review Course - 15
- Emergency Nursing Review Course - 11
- High-risk Neonatal Nursing Review Course - 9
- Inpatient Obstetrics Nursing Review Course - 23
- Maternal Newborn Nursing Review Course - 13
- Medical Surgical Nursing Review Course - 111
- Perioperative Nursing Review Course - 31

Foundations of Nursing Courses | 1,265 learners



- Behavioral Health - 12
- Critical Care - 244
- Emergency - 180
- Medical Surgical - 456
- NICU - 29
- Oncology - 87
- Pediatrics - 69
- PICU - 30
- Perinatal - 75
- Perioperative - 83

Basic Cardiac Rhythm | 1,204 learners

Leadership Essentials | 87 learners

STABLE | 450 learners

Foundations of Simulation | 58 learners

Preceptor Course | 653 learners

Surgical Asepsis for Medical and PA Students | 602 learners





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