



## **Executive Summary**

The Diversity Program at Northwestern Memorial Hospital emphasizes the promotion of diversity interests in every aspect of hospital operations. It maintains that in order to effectively address racial and ethnic disparities and promote diversity within a hospital, efforts should be focused in three areas: representation, inclusiveness, and cultural competency. Representation addresses the hospital's desire to reflect the races and cultures represented in a diverse Chicago community. Northwestern has found that diversity within the staff leads to an increase in the ability to adequately and appropriately address patient needs. Inclusiveness is achieved through creating and encouraging an environment where all patients, staff, and students feel welcome. Finally, cultural competency programs acknowledge the differences that exist among patients in their cultural backgrounds and beliefs, and equip medical staff with the ability to provide treatment that is sensitive to those differences.

The program's successes include an increase in the number of minority medical staff, a more diverse panel of physicians for patient selection, and a higher level of minority physician retention and satisfaction.

Organization Size: 1,350 medical staff physicians; 6,000 employees; 750 beds

## **Program/Initiative Description**

Northwestern Memorial Diversity Program: Rather than playing a supplemental role in the operation of the hospital, advancing diversity interests has been incorporated into the strategic goals of Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Emphasis is placed on diversity in every aspect of hospital operations from physician recruiting to dealing with patients. Northwestern maintains the belief that developing diversity is not only important for patient relationships, but is imperative from a business perspective. The goals of the diversity program are threefold: establishing representation to better reflect the diversity of the communities served, promoting inclusiveness, and increasing cultural competency.

In establishing representation, the hospital reasons that a medical staff reflective of the racial and ethnic composition of the community served will promote the best patient experience. One of the most successful programs has been the Medical Staff Diversity Initiative. To foster a representative environment within the hospital, it was determined that a formal program for minority physician recruitment should be established. Through collaboration between the dean of the medical school and the CEO of the hospital, efforts are made to retain minority medical students as resident physicians at the hospital after graduation. The focus on changing the culture to enhance retention and concerted efforts by

the medical director of Physician has led to a 71 percent increase in the minority medical staff over the past five years.

Inclusiveness is cultivated by creating a welcoming environment for patients and staff alike. An annual minority interns/fellows welcome reception and a minority mentoring program are just two of the programs created for staff. While the initial mentoring program focused on minorities, its success has led to the current development of a more broad-based mentoring program.

The goal in promoting cultural competency is to deliver health care that is sensitive to patients' diverse backgrounds and cultural beliefs. One of the ways this goal is attained is the expansion of programs to meet linguistic needs of non-English speaking patients. Both live interpreters and a "language line" delivering telephonic translation have been increasingly incorporated into health treatment. Cultural competency is further advanced through the inclusion of diversity programs in the regular training for all managers.

**Establishment of Program/Initiative:** The Northwestern Memorial Diversity Program began in the early 1990s, but many of the current initiatives were not established until after 2000.

**Major Objective:** Provide the best patient experience and best physician experience by increasing cultural competency, representation of minorities, and inclusiveness of all

### **Significant Results**

- 71 percent increase in minority medical staff
- Higher retention rates for minority staff

### **External Partners in the Program/Initiative**

- National Association of Health Service Executives
- Chicago United
- Bright Horizons
- Community-based clinics

### **Limitations or Problems Encountered**

- Establishing awareness about the diversity programs offered
- Reflecting the community served in the context of the general health care workforce shortage

### **Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program**

- Establish clearly defined goals for overcoming racial and ethnic disparities and incorporate them into the strategic goals of your organization
- Reflect the community served at all levels; each group has something different to bring to the table
- Identify a dedicated diversity leader to implement programs and initiatives

**Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date:** Not available

**Contact Name:** Sonja Boone, MD

**Title:** Director of Diversity

**Email address:** [sboone@nmh.org](mailto:sboone@nmh.org)

**Telephone:** (312) 926-3599

**Fax:** (312) 926- 3615