



## Novant Health Winston-Salem, N.C.

The AHA Physician Alliance provides resources to connect hospitals with work being done across the field to address the individual, environmental, and systemic factors that contribute to burnout and to foster resilience and well-being. You may find more case studies at our [knowledge hub](#).

### Overview

Novant Health is a not-for-profit integrated health system providing care to over 4.4 million patients each year in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. While nationally recognized in the top 150 best places to work in health care, Novant physicians and nurses reported rising rates of disengagement consistent with their colleagues nationally. Fueled by his own experiences with burnout, Novant's chief human experience officer undertook the challenge to address resiliency and well-being head-on across the system in 2013. The goal was to design a sustainable program to support employees leveraging an executive coaching model. These efforts culminated in the creation of the Novant Health Leadership Development Program, a 3-day intensive leadership training program as well as numerous organizational initiatives to decrease the burdens on clinicians.

### Approach

The development of the Novant Health Leadership Development Program was based on the personal executive coaching experience of Tom Jenike, M.D, a family physician and Novant Health's chief human experience officer. After 10 years of practice and taking on increasing leadership roles, Dr. Jenike struggled with burnout and balancing personal and professional aspects of his life. Executive coaching provided Dr. Jenike with a

### Impact

Novant Health successfully implemented a sustainable wellness coaching program with greater than 2,000 graduates as of 2018. Over several years, the program has demonstrated a sustained increase in employee engagement and significant success in improving patient experience. The program positively impacts lives. Participants routinely describe the program as life-changing and career saving. Many times we hear from spouses or family members, thanking us for what the program has done for their marriages and families.

The "army" of graduates have now spearheaded numerous efforts to enhance connectivity and decrease the organizational impact on providers, including lessening the administrative burdens. The principles of empathetic communication, being present, and resiliency are now integrated into the onboarding process for all new hires. New physicians are also paired with a mentor who has graduated from the program to help with adjustment during the first six months on the job. Team care design has seen the implementation of EHR support, scribes, embedded behavioral health into clinics, and all team members working at the top of license.

much deeper level of self-awareness, created new clarity on priorities and allowed him to solidify his purpose as a leader, physician, husband and father. He realized he wasn't simply a victim of the medical industry but had patterns of behavior such as always attempting to please others and saying yes to every request. Dr. Jenike started his journey to rediscovering why he became a doctor and let go of low value obligations. He received buy-in from CEO, Carl Armato to create and pilot a program to begin to normalize the conversation around wellness, resiliency, and stress among his colleagues at Novant Health. Themes included

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identifying the top priorities in both personal and professional life, how to reconnect with the reasons you entered medicine, effective communication, accepting the pressures of today's health care industry and making proactive changes to enhance the experience of work-life and overall life.

Thirty-two physicians participated in the initial pilot program. With positive feedback from the first cohort of graduates,

the three-day program is now open to all physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and administrative leaders. Additionally, a one-day condensed program is offered to frontline staff including nurses and other members of the Novant Health team. The program, which offers CME/CNE credits has now seen more than 2,000 team members participate and has quarterly "alumni retreats" to enhance sustainability.

Novant Health reviewed engagement metrics and mission alignment scores to glean the impact of the program organizationally. Program graduates



**Novant Health Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte, N.C.**

had 2015 Press Ganey engagement and alignment scores in the 89th and 92nd percentile compared to rates of 62nd and 67th percentile for those physicians who did not participate. The program appears to be having a carryover effect with engagement rising even in non-participants, with a rise in overall employee engagement at Novant from the 41st to 87th percentile. Early data in the outpatient setting also show an improvement in patient experience. Currently, program participants rank in the 97th percentile for employee engagement and alignment. Overall the Novant Health medical group which encompasses more than 2,500 providers ranks in the 92nd percentile nationally in engagement.

## **Lessons Learned**

Be strategic in who you pick for your pilot. Dr. Jenike selected physicians who were leaders and considered influential by their peers. They then amplified the program's success by championing it across the system.

Branding matters. Novant overcame the stigma associated with burnout by naming its program the Novant Health Leadership Development Program. This deliberate choice aligned closely with physician career interests acknowledges the objective of enhancing leadership of one's own

life as well as their respective teams and helped to attract applicants who might have otherwise been reluctant to participate.

Decide your budget before designing your program. To achieve this level of success, the health system spent over \$2 million total in investments to implement and promote the program. Novant currently spends approximately \$3,500 per participant in the three day program and \$200 for the one day scalable version, which may be a barrier to replication in financially challenged systems. This needs to be weighed against the numerous costs of not addressing the epidemic of burnout. There may still be ways to leverage aspects of its approach without implementing the totality of the program.

## Future Goals

Novant Health is planning on expanding participation in the Leadership Development Program to include all providers, while scaling the experience to nursing and other job families. The ultimate vision is to create a culture where providers and team members at Novant Health feel truly cared for so that they can have meaningful and healthy lives and a supportive home to provide world-class care for patients.

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