

CASE STUDY: Dayton Children's Hospital

Using the Right Data to Develop a Strategic Approach to Recruitment



THE SITUATION

Hospitals and health systems nationwide are facing intense competition for physicians and advanced practice providers (APPs) due to ongoing shortages in clinician supply. Although many organizations are working to create a better work/life balance for these clinicians, burnout continues to be a major concern and is compounding recruitment and retention issues. These dynamics are occurring in the context of increased patient demand and the desire from consumers to receive health care in a manner that is convenient to them – making it difficult for organizations to effectively assess changing service needs and staffing requirements.

Amidst this complex backdrop, Dayton Children's Hospital was looking to formalize its clinician recruitment plan. Recognized as a Best Children's Hospital by U.S. News & World Report, Dayton Children's is a 181-bed community-based pediatric acute care teaching hospital and trauma center located between two large markets. As the only pediatric hospital in the city, Dayton Children's provides comprehensive pediatric care throughout western Ohio and the surrounding states.

Like many organizations, the number of physicians and APPs at Dayton Children's had grown swiftly and organically without a comprehensive and centralized strategy to support its sustainability. Dayton Children's realized this approach was not fiscally responsible and may have implications on its recruitment process and the ability to accurately predict its patient needs.

With approximately 400 physicians and APPs, Dayton Children's was staffed at a level that provided superior access to the communities it serves. Although there was minimal anticipated growth in the patient population, the organization had a strong desire to ensure optimal clinical team composition to help meet evolving and ongoing patient needs. Dayton Children's did not have a 'master plan' for recruitment in place and did not budget for a specific number of clinicians per year. As such, the organization was seeking data to support the development of a more proactive, rather than reactive, process for strategic clinical workforce planning.

THE APPROACH

Dayton Children's partnered with SullivanCotter to build a strategic workforce plan that prioritized growth and aligned with population trends in its market. Senior leadership recognized the need for an external partner to provide the data necessary to develop a holistic approach to hiring.

Utilizing SullivanCotter's proprietary Provider Needs Assessment (PNA) and call-verified supply and claims-based demand data, Dayton Children's was looking to more accurately assess patient demand, identify changing service needs, and forecast the surplus or deficit of pediatric specialists over the next 3-5 years.

Supported by decades of clinical and operational health care industry experience, SullivanCotter provided Dayton Children's with unique insight into the challenges health systems and medical groups face when trying to improve workforce planning initiatives and optimize clinical performance.

To start the process, Dayton Children's assembled a team to drive these efforts. This included the Vice President & Chief Ambulatory Officer, President of Dayton Children's Specialty Physicians, Executive Director of Physician Network Development, a senior business manager, and relevant service line directors. Key stakeholders such as senior leadership and physician executives were brought into the process to prioritize needs and obtain buy-in moving forward.

From there, SullivanCotter worked with Dayton Children's and its data analysts to:

- Determine clinician demand, population demographics and payor mix by ZIP code
- Capture the supply of clinicians to determine the current and forecasted surplus or deficit
- Incorporate Dayton Children's physician and APP rosters with employed clinical FTEs
- Identify service line delivery gaps and opportunities
- Assess patient demand using predictive modeling founded on market-specific demographic utilization patterns
- Provide access to supply editing and audit tools, Stark-compliant reports, ongoing updates to population demographics, and SullivanCotter benchmark data tables

SullivanCotter used quantitative and qualitative methods to generate data-driven insights and tiered recruitment priorities through a series of surveys, interviews, access studies and facilitated planning sessions. Dayton Children's received a formal 3 to 5-year recruitment plan with a focus on optimizing care teams, along with customized reports and patient demographic data by ZIP code.

OUTCOMES

Dayton Children's moved from a case-by-case recruitment approach focused on individual service line requirements to an overarching strategic workforce plan that used patient needs as the catalyst for determining the appropriate number and type of clinicians. Dayton Children's was also empowered to validate all recruitment and retention decisions through a single, centralized source of data rather than one-off business plans.

"Having the type of quantifiable data made available by SullivanCotter's PNA improved internal confidence and forecasting by providing us with a more accurate picture of what demand may look like. This enabled us to shift from ad-hoc decision-making to the establishment of a more holistic approach," remarked Derek Theodor, Executive Director, Dayton Children's Specialty Physicians.

In addition, two organizational outcomes came as a result of the PNA process:

Primary Care

Dayton Children's market is primarily comprised of private, pediatric and adult primary care offices. Post-pandemic, this landscape changed due to an increase in retirements, greater provider focus on work/life

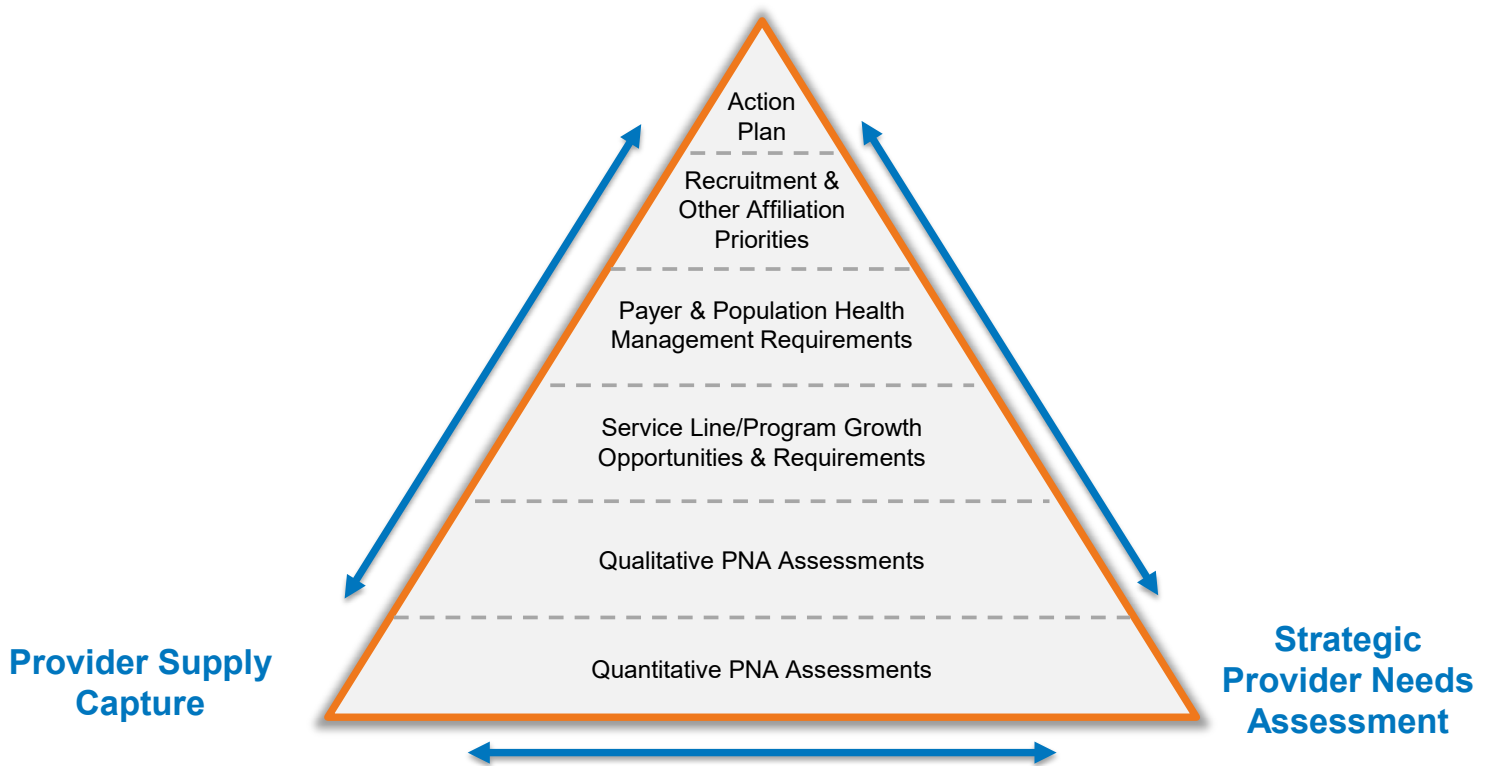
balance, and financial pressures resulting in practices closing. Using results from SullivanCotter’s PNA, Dayton Children’s identified a deficit of pediatric primary care providers and insufficient access for patients. The organization created a strategic plan to partner with primary care providers within the community to better meet patient needs. Broken down by ZIP code, Dayton Children’s could see the number of clinicians, number of patients, and payer mix in each area – helping to inform how it would address the primary care deficit and meet all of the care needs of the patients in its system.

Succession Planning

While succession planning had often been discussed at Dayton Children’s, there was previously no tool available to help quantify the potential impact on patient access. As a result, the PNA results were eye-opening. Dayton Children’s used the PNA application and the embedded reports to identify areas where there is a projected deficit in the next three years based on anticipated clinician departures. Along with key demographic details, the organization can now examine the productivity levels of current physicians and APPs to proactively plan for retirements and have new clinicians onboarded in time to avoid any care gaps.

In addition to primary care and succession planning outcomes, the PNA has proved to be a valuable resource to validate all manpower decision-making. Dayton Children’s can better budget for future recruitment initiatives and avoid making hiring decisions without sound data to back them up.

Integrated and Expanded Workforce Plan



LESSONS LEARNED

As health systems and medical groups consider evaluating their clinical recruitment strategies, SullivanCotter's model is transferable to both pediatric and non-pediatric organizations. There are a few key lessons learned from Dayton Children's experience for other organizations to consider:

- 1. The value of the PNA is in how the results are implemented.** The PNA is an interactive web-based application that includes 15 comprehensive, data-driven reports. The data is valuable when organizations commit to applying the results.
- 2. Prioritize project goals at the outset.** The PNA results can be used for many reasons, including market growth, succession planning, and workforce planning. Establishing goals at the beginning of the process can guide the allocation of resources and define a successful implementation approach.
- 3. Ensure a collaborative approach.** All teams within a health system, including business development, marketing, recruitment and more, have a valuable role in the PNA process and can utilize the data within their particular functions.

About Dayton Children's Hospital

Dayton Children's Hospital's mission is the relentless pursuit of optimal health for every child within its reach. This includes a 181-bed hospital in southwest Ohio. In 2023, Dayton Children's had 8,296 inpatient admissions, 101,675 emergency room visits, 560,097 outpatient visits and 13,224 surgeries.

Dayton Children's goal is to provide an exceptional patient experience, not just sometimes, but with every single family and every single interaction.

About SullivanCotter

SullivanCotter partners with health care and other not-for-profit organizations to drive performance and improve outcomes through the development and implementation of integrated workforce strategies. Using our time-tested methodologies and industry-leading research and information, we provide data driven insights and expertise to help organizations align business strategy and performance objectives – enabling our clients to deliver on their mission, vision and values.

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