2025 STATE OF NURSE MENTORSHIP

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

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Executive Summary

As workforce stabilization remains a top priority across U.S. healthcare systems, nursing leaders continue to evaluate strategies that support both short- and long-term sustainability. Mentorship has emerged as a frequently cited solution; however, recent data suggest growing challenges in implementation, perceived value, and measurable return on investment (ROI)—particularly for bedside nurses.

This whitepaper presents findings from Lead for Care's annual State of Mentorship nursing survey, highlighting trends in mentorship adoption, perceived importance, barriers to success, and implications for nurse retention. The data reveal a widening gap between the recognized importance of mentorship and organizations' ability to deploy programs that are sustainable, effective, and impactful.

Mentorship Importance: Shifting Perceptions

Mentorship continues to be viewed as an important component of professional development within nursing, though perceptions have declined over time.

84%
84% of respondents rate mentorship as extremely or very important for professional development

Down from 97% in 2024 and 98% in 2023

This decline signals potential dissatisfaction with how mentorship is currently being delivered rather than a rejection of mentorship as a concept.

Respondents identified mentorship as a valuable tool to support professional development, retention, culture, transition to practice and professionalism, as well as engagement and satisfaction. These themes remain consistent with prior years' findings.

Current State of Mentorship Programs

Despite continued interest in mentorship, fewer organizations report having active programs in place:

45% report active mentorship programs (down from 59% in 2024)
5% are unsure
50% report no formal mentorship program

This represents a concerning shift. In 2024, 59% of healthcare organizations reported offering mentorship programs—up from 36% in 2022—yet adoption appears to be declining.

Barriers to Mentorship Implementation

Organizations without formal mentorship programs cited the following barriers:

No internal resources to manage the program	55%
Lack of expertise to design a program	50%
Difficulty establishing structure	45%
Lack of interest	10%
Leadership does not see value	10%

These findings underscore operational and structural challenges rather than philosophical opposition to mentorship.

How Mentorship Programs Are Administered

Among organizations with mentorship programs:

68% are fully internally developed and managed
11% use a hybrid internal/vendor model
11% rely fully on vendor support
11% are unsure

The predominance of internally managed programs may contribute to variability in quality, scalability, and outcomes.

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Populations Targeted by Mentorship Programs

Organizations report mentorship efforts focused primarily on early-career nurses:

New graduates (non-preceptorship)	81%
Early career nurses	25%
Specialty areas	19%
All bedside/clinical nurses	19%
Managers or above	19%
Emerging leaders	13%

Additionally, **81% of respondents** report having a formal nurse residency program. This aligns with a recent focus in nursing to better support new nurses entering the profession aimed at reducing turnover and more effective transitions to practice.

Interpreting the Data: Key Insights

While mentorship is widely viewed as important and is frequently embedded within nurse residency programs, outcomes remain misaligned with expectations:

46%
46% of respondents identify retention as a key success metric for new graduate mentorship programs

50%
Yet nationally, approximately 50% of new nurses leave within their first two years of employment (Nurse.org)

Commonly cited drivers of early turnover—stressful work environments and inadequate transition support—are precisely the issues mentorship is intended to address.

The data suggest that mentorship programs lacking specialized design, consistent structure, and external expertise may fail to deliver intended outcomes, leading organizations to question the value of continued investment.

Implications for Nurse Retention and ROI

If effective mentorship could reduce early-career nurse turnover from 50% to single digits, the financial and cultural implications would be substantial. Beyond direct cost savings related to recruitment and onboarding, organizations could realize improvements in:

Workforce stability

Nurse satisfaction and engagement

Professional governance participation

Leadership pipeline development

A Structured, Evidence-Based Approach

Organizations using Lead for Care's mentor-enabled leadership development model report measurable outcomes across retention, engagement, and professional growth. The model pairs short, targeted microlearning leadership content with guided mentorship to enable deep learning and immediate application for mentees. While providing mentors with microlearning content for mentorship and a toolkit of supporting materials making mentorship consistent, easy, and scalable. In turn, enabling early career nurses to develop foundational leadership and professional skills early in their careers while providing experienced nurses the ability to simply and effectively serve as mentors.

Reported outcomes include:
- New nurse turnover reduced to 2–10%
- Increased clarity in career direction and role confidence
- Improved mentor preparedness and satisfaction
- Streamlined program administration, reporting, and evaluation
- Improvement across all program competencies

$ **Organizations have reported estimated retention-related savings ranging from $354,000 to over $1 million within 18–24 months of program implementation.**

Conclusion

Mentorship remains a critical, yet under-optimized, strategy for stabilizing the nursing workforce. The findings from this year's survey highlight the need for mentorship models that are intentional, scalable, and aligned with the realities of bedside nursing.

For nursing leaders, the opportunity lies not in whether to invest in mentorship—but in how to design and support programs that deliver meaningful, measurable impact.