



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS A LEVER FOR SAFETY CULTURE





A recent Becker's Hospital Review [article](#)¹ highlighted a concerning trend: nearly half of healthcare workers report experiencing a low safety culture.

The findings point to deeper organizational challenges. When staff do not feel supported, valued, or empowered to speak up, the foundation of patient safety begins to weaken.

Research consistently shows that strong safety cultures are built on several key elements:

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Psychological safety
- Feeling valued and heard
- Leadership support
- Effective management of stress and burnout

When these elements improve, organizations see measurable outcomes, including:



Stronger patient safety performance



Higher workforce engagement



Lower staff turnover



Improved patient experience scores

These factors are often discussed in the context of organizational culture. However, they are also deeply influenced by how clinicians—particularly nurses—are prepared to navigate the realities of modern healthcare environments.

A Different Approach: Developing Leadership at the Bedside

In one healthcare organization where they have implemented the Lead for Care Program, they examined the results of their recent employee engagement survey to compare those who completed the LFC Program and those who have not.

These results echoed what Lead for Care has observed across various client sites - that when nurses receive structured leadership development paired with mentorship, early in their careers, key drivers of safety culture improve in meaningful ways.

¹ Becker's Hospital Review. March 2026. *Nearly Half of Healthcare Workers Report Low Safety Culture*. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/quality/patient-safety-outcomes/nearly-half-of-healthcare-workers-report-low-safety-culture-press-ganey>





Among nurses who completed the Lead for Care program, notable differences were found in those key outcomes that create a cultural of safety compared to baseline nursing populations:

Raw Differences in Percent Favorable Scores between LFC vs Non-LFC Nurses

SAFETY CULTURE DRIVER	LFC ALUMNI PERFORMANCE	WHY IT MATTERS
Intent to stay	+9.5%	Stable teams improve continuity and patient safety
Teamwork	+5.2%	Effective coordination is essential to safe care delivery
Support managing burnout	+13.3%	Burnout is strongly associated with safety events
Feeling valued by the organization	+19.3%	Psychological safety encourages speaking up
Ideas are valued	+16.6%	Openness to ideas and innovation encourages problem-solving and ownership of work
Collaboration	+12.7%	Cross-disciplinary teamwork improves outcomes
People development	+6.4%	Leadership culture shapes behavior across teams
Business acumen	+10.6%	Greater system awareness supports better decision-making

Taken together, these results closely mirror the cultural drivers identified in the Becker's report.

Culture Is Built Through Capability

Safety culture is often described as an organizational priority, but it is ultimately experienced through daily interactions—how teams communicate, how stress is managed, and whether individuals feel confident raising concerns.

Developing leadership capabilities among bedside nurses creates a practical way to strengthen these dynamics. When nurses are equipped with the skills to communicate effectively, manage complexity, support peers, and navigate challenging situations, they contribute to a more resilient workforce culture.

Over time, these shifts do more than improve engagement; they reinforce the conditions necessary for safe, high-quality patient care.

Leadership development paired with mentorship represents not only a workforce investment, but a measurable lever for strengthening safety culture across healthcare organizations. If your organization is looking to learn how to support a safety culture at scale, reach out to Heidi at Lead for Care (hkamm@leadforcare.com).

