

# USC Nurse Residency Program Transformation

## A Competency-Driven Approach to Transition-to-Practice Success



### The Challenge

University of Southern California Verdugo Hills Hospital's Nurse Residency Program leadership recognized several barriers commonly affecting newly licensed nurses transitioning to practice:

- Fragmented competency assessments
- Overreliance on task-based checklists
- Limited visibility into readiness for independent practice
- Inconsistent evaluation methods among preceptors
- Retention concerns among newly licensed nurses

The organization sought a more comprehensive and evidence-based approach to competency development that aligned with professional nursing standards while supporting PTAP® accreditation goals.

### The Solution

#### Strategic Partnership with GCPD

USC partnered with the Galen Center for Professional Development (GCPD) to redesign its Nurse Residency Program around:

#### *Professional Role Identity Formation*

Helping residents understand and internalize the responsibilities, accountability, and decision-making expectations of the professional registered nurse role.

#### *Readiness-to-Practice Indicators (RPIs)*

Implementing evidence-based competency measures aligned with:

- ANA Scope and Standards of Practice
- AACN Essentials
- PTAP® Standards
- National competency expectations

#### *Structured Competency Intelligence*

Replacing fragmented assessments with a centralized competency management approach that enabled:

### *Structured Competency Intelligence enabled:*

- Real-time progression tracking
- Objective readiness evaluations
- Consistent preceptor feedback
- Leadership visibility into workforce readiness

### *Accreditation Readiness Support*

Providing strategic guidance and competency documentation processes that supported alignment with national transition-to-practice standards.

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Metric	Outcome
Nurse Residents Enrolled	81
Program Completion Rate	100%
12-Month Retention Improvement	13%
First Cohort Retention	92%
Subsequent Cohort Retention	>95%
PTAP® Accreditation	Achieved
Competency Framework	Implemented Organization-Wide
Readiness-to-Practice Tracking	Real-Time Visibility

## Resident Impact = Increased Confidence

Residents reported improved confidence in:

- Independent practice
- Prioritization
- Delegation
- Clinical judgment
- Professional decision-making

“The RPIs made me more confident in being able to work independently. You were able to pause, reflect, and critically think about delivering safe patient care.”

### *Greater Role Clarity*

Residents developed a deeper understanding of the professional responsibilities associated with nursing practice, enabling stronger decision-making and professional identity formation through the application of the *Professional Role Identity Formation Theory* (O'Rourke, 2019, 2021).

## Preceptor Impact

### *More Objective Evaluation*

Preceptors gained a structured framework for assessing readiness for independent practice using objective evidence rather than subjective perceptions.

“As a preceptor, it guides me to determine if a new graduate can care for their full patient assignment independently.”

### *Stronger Coaching Conversations*

The RPI framework improved consistency in feedback and development planning, allowing preceptors to identify competency gaps and create targeted interventions.

## Nursing Leadership Impact

### *Competency Visibility*

Leadership gained access to meaningful data showing:

- Resident progression
- Competency achievement
- Areas requiring intervention
- Readiness for independent practice

### *Reduced Administrative Burden*

Rather than building competency frameworks internally, leaders leveraged an evidence-based structure already aligned with national standards.

### *Accreditation Success*

The redesigned residency program successfully achieved PTAP® accreditation, validating alignment with nationally recognized transition-to-practice best practices.

## Why It Matters

Most learning management systems measure **course completion**. GCPD measures **competency readiness**. USC's success demonstrates that organizations do not need more educational content to improve outcomes.

They need:

- Competency clarity
- Objective readiness indicators
- Professional development expertise
- Leadership visibility
- Strategic implementation support

## Key Takeaway

### *More Content ≠ More Competency*

The partnership between USC and GCPD demonstrates that meaningful workforce development is achieved not through larger content libraries, but through evidence-based competency management, expert guidance, and a clear understanding of practice readiness. **The result: stronger nurses, stronger retention, and successful accreditation outcomes.**