AHN

2025 Nursing Annual Report

Caring

nurses making a difference

On the cover:

Dominique Levier, BSN, RN

Our nurses practice at many AHN facilities including:

- Allegheny General Hospital.
- Allegheny Valley Hospital.
- Canonsburg Hospital.
- Forbes Hospital.
- AHN Grove City.
- Jefferson Hospital.
- Saint Vincent Hospital.
- Westfield Memorial Hospital.
- West Penn Hospital.
- Wexford Hospital.
- Citizens School of Nursing.
- West Penn School of Nursing.

A Message From AHN Nursing Executive Leadership

It has been an honor to serve in the Interim Chief Nurse Executive role for this past year. While my permanent role remains Vice President of Nursing Operations and Innovation, stepping into this responsibility has given me an even deeper appreciation for the strength and heart of our nursing community.

I would like to warmly welcome Ashley Carlucci, DNP, MHA, RN, CEN, CENP, as our new Chief Nurse Executive. I am excited about the leadership she brings to Pittsburgh and confident that her vision and experience will continue to advance nursing excellence across our system.

This year's Annual Nursing Report reflects the remarkable work happening across our six pillars: Provider of Choice, Employer of Choice, Growth, Living Health, Innovation, and Finance. Each hospital and every nursing role has contributed to the stories shared here. These are not separate accomplishments — they are chapters in one unified nursing story. Whether at the bedside, in ambulatory care, in procedural areas, in leadership, in education, or in operations, your impact is interconnected. This is truly One AHN Nursing.

Being an Employer of Choice is about more than recruitment. It is about engagement, belonging, and opportunity. It means ensuring every nurse feels valued and empowered to grow. From shared governance and leadership development to innovation and career mobility across campuses and specialties, we are building an environment where nurses can create meaningful, lifelong careers. Engagement is not a program. It is a promise to support your voice, your development, and your aspirations.

As our organization continues to grow, I am energized by the opportunities ahead and by the strength of what we are building together. While the recent spotlight on Pittsburgh nursing with "The Pitt" captures pieces of our profession, it often misses what happens behind the scenes. It misses the nurse who stays late to cover a colleague's shift, the team that works a 14-hour day because the emergency department is overflowing, the coworkers who become family, and the quiet generosity of collecting funds or organizing support for a teammate facing a cancer diagnosis. It misses the laughter in break rooms after a hard shift and the unspoken understanding that no one carries the weight alone.

These are the moments that define who we are. It is truly an honor to serve alongside you. Thank you for living our pillars each day and for shaping the future of nursing — together.

With gratitude,

Hope Waltenbaugh
MSN, RN, CNOR, NEA-BC
Vice President, Nursing Operations and Innovation
AHN Executive Nursing

Retention by Design: The Graduate Nurse Talent Pool Model

To strengthen recruitment and retention in our med/surg and telemetry units, nursing leaders launched the Graduate Nurse (GN) Talent Pool initiative. It focuses on hiring newly graduated nurses into these critical practice areas while improving readiness for the transition to professional practice.

The program was designed to support targeted recruitment and hiring, increase preparedness for bedside practice, and create a stronger early-career experience that promotes retention and long-term growth within AHN.

The initiative has expanded quickly over two years. In the first year (summer 2023), the program was developed through collaboration between Allegheny General Hospital (AGH) and West Penn Hospital, with training hosted at West Penn across three cohorts and supporting 49 graduate nurses. In the second year (spring/summer 2024), the program evolved to an AGH-led model, hosted at AGH and expanded to four cohorts, reaching 60 graduate nurses.

The program's structure intentionally blends onboarding, professional socialization, and hands-on competency development. Early weeks focus on connection, nursing orientation, and practical readiness support, including technology and documentation troubleshooting. Training then advances to high-yield clinical and safety content reinforced through skills simulation, leader engagement, and case-based learning that builds confidence before nurses transition fully into unit-based orientation and practice.

Retention outcomes reinforce the value of this investment. For the 2023 cohort, one-year retention reached 95.9% (47 of 49), demonstrating strong early-career stability in the workforce pipeline. For the 2024 cohort (AGH only, year-to-date), one-year retention is 95%, reflecting continued success as the program scales. Importantly, the initiative is not only retaining nurses, but retaining them within their intended practice settings. In 2023, 75.5% remained on their original unit, supporting workforce stability in high-need areas.

Looking ahead, the program is scaling to meet continued demand, with approximately 100 graduate nurses expected to start this summer and three GN Talent Pool cohorts planned. The team will continue tracking retention and comparing outcomes to nonparticipating orientees as part of ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.

DENISE PETRAS, DNP, RN, NPD-BC

CASSANDRA TUTHILL, RN

Advanced Rehab Excellence and Care

Allegheny Valley Hospital is proud to announce the expansion of its Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation facility, increasing bed capacity from 17 to 29. This strategic enhancement allows for broader access to critical rehabilitation services, enabling more individuals to receive care closer to home.

The revitalized unit integrates state-of-the-art technology, elevates patient care standards, and offers expanded specialized programs, particularly in stroke, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and general rehabilitative services.

MALLORY ORTIZ, RN, BSN

To support these advancements and address growing patient needs, Allegheny Valley Hospital has welcomed a diverse team of new professionals, including dedicated nurses, various therapists, and essential support personnel, all committed to achieving optimal patient outcomes.

This multidisciplinary team focuses on individualized care planning, collaborating with patients and their support systems to facilitate successful discharge. Further underscoring its dedication to exceptional care, the Acute Rehabilitation Unit has earned its second certification from The Joint Commission for its TBI Program.

This prestigious recognition highlights Allegheny Valley Hospital's unwavering commitment to the highest standards of health care quality and safety for its patients, workforce, and the community. Highmark values this collaboration, working together to ensure all individuals receive the safest, highest quality, and best-value health care across all settings.

A New Era in Stroke Care: Canonsburg Hospital's Certification Journey

Before achieving Primary Stroke Center certification, Canonsburg Hospital faced a significant gap in local stroke care access.

Despite the tireless efforts of its dedicated medical professionals, many individuals experiencing stroke symptoms were diverted to other primary stroke-certified hospitals. This routing was the result of EMS-mandated protocols requiring suspected stroke patients to be transported to facilities offering specialized stroke interventions.

Consequently, these patients, who critically needed immediate care when every second was vital, faced delays as they were redirected elsewhere. This situation not only compromised timely treatment but also underscored the community's urgent need for Canonsburg Hospital to obtain Primary Stroke Center Certification.

The year 2022 marked a turning point for Canonsburg Hospital, as it felt the absence of a dedicated stroke program manager. Without a central guiding force, navigating the complex requirements of specific stroke measures and policies proved challenging. As part of our southern strategy to align care between hospitals, the stroke program manager expanded her role to cover Canonsburg.

With a dedicated multidisciplinary team now in place, the stroke program has standardized processes. This included implementing crucial tools, such as stroke alerts, and establishing telestroke services for emergent AHN neurology consultations. Comprehensive policies were developed while applying the Joint Commission Standards of Care.

The momentum from previous initiatives carried into 2025, a year marked by significant advancements. Recognizing the long-term needs of stroke survivors, Canonsburg leadership partnered with AHN stroke leadership to expand the stroke navigator role to support Canonsburg. This crucial addition provides patients with invaluable support, serving as a vital resource not only for stroke survivors but also for the broader community.

Recognizing the critical need to empower the community with lifesaving knowledge, the stroke team championed prevention and early recognition. They actively engage with residents at various community events and health fairs. The team provides readily available educational materials.

This direct outreach equips individuals with vital information on stroke risk factors and warning signs, using the memorable BE FAST acronym. They stress the indispensable importance of immediately calling 911. This outreach empowers the community to act swiftly and confidently in the event of a potential stroke. Every second saved could preserve brain function and improve outcomes.

After extensive work and planning, Canonsburg Hospital submitted its application to The Joint Commission for Primary Stroke Center designation.

KAYLA POWELL, MSN, RN

JAMIE PRICE, MSN, RN, CCRN, NE-BC

The initial certification review took place in May 2025, and Canonsburg received official designation on July 3, 2025.

This achievement elevated Canonsburg Hospital's capabilities and fulfilled a community promise, expanding access to specialized stroke care. The newly certified stroke team immediately began collaborating with prehospital services, organizing visits, and engaging local ambulance providers.

In these meetings, the stroke medical director presented the new certification, underscored the importance of prehospital stroke alerts, and detailed quality initiatives now in place. These measures support optimal outcomes for all stroke patients, whether they arrive by car or EMS.

Achieving this designation was a demanding journey, marked by challenges, dedication, and commitment to community welfare.

Through this effort, Canonsburg Hospital has elevated the standard of stroke care for its community and improved timely access to lifesaving treatment.

Every second counts for those experiencing a stroke, from prevention and early recognition to post-discharge support.

TRAUMA
FORBES
P.O.B. 1
Allegheny Health Network
Forbes
Hospital
EMERGENCY
TRAUMA CENTER
Surgery Center
Outpatient Services
Imaging Center
Medical Office Bldgs
Radiation Oncology
Visitor Entrance
STOP
ALL WAY

Forbes Trauma Program Achieves Record Growth

Forbes Hospital celebrated the exceptional performance and significant growth of its Trauma Program, which demonstrated remarkable increases in both patient admissions and overall volume through the end of 2025. This success underscores a commitment to providing high-quality, accessible trauma care and solidifies Forbes Hospital's position as a critical health care resource in the Eastern Suburbs.

The past four years have been transformative for the Forbes Trauma Program. Following a period of fluctuations, including the challenges presented in 2020 during the pandemic, the program not only rebounded but surged to unprecedented levels of volume and acuity.

Since 2021, Forbes Trauma admissions increased by 96.7%, nearly doubling the number of patients served. Admissions grew from 861 in 2021 to 1,694 in 2025, marking the highest patient volume to date. This consistent upward trend reflects increasing trust in the expert teams and the vital role the program plays in emergency medical services.

Beyond admissions, overall Forbes Trauma volume expanded even more dramatically, increasing by 146.8% from 2021 to 3,169 in 2025. This significant increase indicates not only more patients seeking care, but also an increase in case complexity, the scope of services utilized per patient, and a broader scope of trauma-related encounters now managed by the program. This growth demonstrates enhanced capacity and a comprehensive approach to trauma care.

Key highlights of the program's progression include:

Sustained momentum: Year-over-year growth has been consistently strong, particularly from 2022 onward, with double-digit percentage increases in both admissions and overall volume.

Meeting community needs: This growth signifies the program's ability to meet the rising demand for specialized trauma services, ensuring more individuals in critical need receive timely, expert care close to home.

Team excellence: This extraordinary achievement reflects the dedication, skill, and tireless efforts of every member of the Forbes Trauma Program team, including physicians, nurses, support staff, and administrators. Their commitment to excellence supports every success.

These milestones continue to inspire ongoing momentum. The growth of the Forbes Trauma Program is a strong example of how Forbes Trauma is delivering on its mission to provide definitive and comprehensive trauma care to patients across the eastern suburbs.

Continued excellence and innovation in trauma services are expected to further solidify Forbes' role as a regional leader.

Forbes is also experiencing unprecedented growth in EMS arrivals, with a 17.5% increase since 2022. This surge is attributed to several initiatives, including the addition of services to command in Murrysville, quarterly EMS director meetings with hospital leadership, outreach efforts by the prehospital team, and proactive outreach and case follow-up from the trauma team. These efforts are projected to contribute to record EMS arrival volume in 2026.

Sepsis care done right

Sepsis is a time-sensitive, high-risk condition where minutes matter and reliable early recognition and evidence-based treatment can mean the difference between recovery and rapid deterioration.

In 2024, Grove City identified a concerning trend: After several years of progress, CMS SEP-1 sepsis bundle compliance had slipped, and readmissions for general medicine sepsis/infectious disease patients increased. In response, the team elevated sepsis as a priority and launched a focused, interdisciplinary improvement effort that became the basis for a HAP Award submission, highlighting both innovation and measurable performance gains.

A monthly, interdisciplinary sepsis work group was reestablished with strong leadership sponsorship and representation from administration, quality, physicians, nursing, lab, and pharmacy in late 2021/early 2022. The group used structured improvement methods to identify gaps in workflow reliability, especially around handoffs, tool utilization, and sustainment, and then hardwired solutions into daily practice.

A sepsis bundle handoff tool, developed directly from frontline feedback, was embedded into ED workflow and monitored as an ongoing performance metric. Weekly reporting, visibility of results, and recognition helped reinforce adoption and accountability across teams.

Reliability in screening and early detection was strengthened at the front door. RN triage sepsis screening achieved 100% completion for ED patients with a clinical impression of sepsis, sustained not only through November, but throughout the entire year, including 100% completion in December. The team paired this workflow reliability with ongoing education, sepsis awareness activities, and community outreach to support earlier presentation and timely intervention.

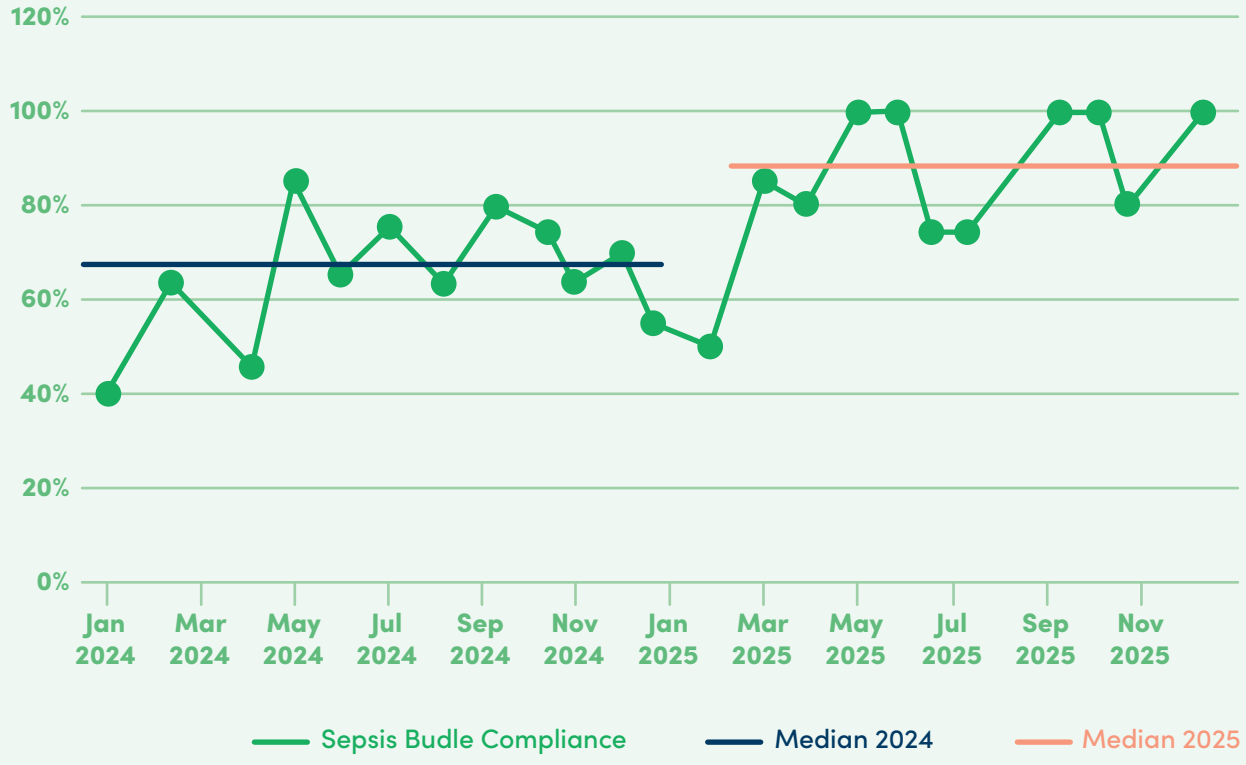
The results demonstrate meaningful, sustained improvement. By November 2025 abstraction, SEP-1 compliance increased to 85.4% (106/124 cases), up from a 2024 median of 64.6%, a statistically significant change that exceeded the project goal. December 2025 performance remained strong at 83.3%, resulting in a 2025 year-to-date Grove City Hospital SEP-1 compliance of 85.29%. Readmissions also improved, decreasing year-to-date compared to the prior year.

Today, Grove City is leading the network in sepsis bundle performance, reinforcing what is possible when teams align around standard work, transparent metrics, and sustained interdisciplinary partnership to improve outcomes for patients with sepsis.

PAMELA DOLLING, BSN, RN

MEGAN KISER, MSN, RN, CPHRM, CPHQ

SEPSIS BUNDLE COMPLIANCE



Turning the Tide: How Zone Leaders Transformed Jefferson ED

LORRI BREDA, BSN, RN

Since 2024, Jefferson Hospital's Emergency Department faced critical challenges. This included an entirely new leadership team, high patient volumes, escalating staff turnover, missed lunches, and declining patient satisfaction. As a result, department members experienced widespread stress and burnout.

In response to these challenges, the leadership team created a new model for each department zone by appointing experienced staff as zone leaders to guide, educate, and support new graduate nurses. Typically, a zone leader is an experienced nurse, often a preceptor who knows our ED processes well. Each ED zone, staffed by two primary nurses, a patient care technician, and a dedicated zone leader, covers 10 to 12 patients. This structure ensures that every patient receives care from a cohesive, dedicated team.

Zone leaders play a pivotal role within this model. Their responsibilities are multifaceted and vital to each zone. They support staff, coordinate patient throughput, and enhance the patient experience by assisting with critical care, facilitating discharges, streamlining admissions, and coordinating transport. Most importantly, they enable essential staff breaks. As an extra point of contact, zone leaders further elevate the patient experience.

This structured approach fostered a more supportive work environment, driving a 21-point increase in Glint Survey scores directly attributed to the zone leader model. This increase led to two measurable outcomes: First-year RN turnover dropped from 44% to 0%, and overall RN turnover decreased from 26% to 6%, demonstrating improved retention. Additionally, by empowering experienced nurses with mentorship responsibilities, the structure provides new graduates with practical support and bridges the transition from orientation to practice. Currently there are no RN vacancies at Jefferson ED.

Further highlighting the benefits, zone leaders have improved operational efficiency and staff well-being, as shown by a dramatic reduction in missed lunches — from 1,100 a quarter in 2024 to under 200 per quarter in 2025. Zone leaders assist staff by covering lunch breaks, allowing nurses to decompress off the unit. This improvement in staff support coincided with the department exceeding all patient experience goals in 2025.

The zone leaders' unparalleled success is evident in the department's improved performance. Despite a rise in patient volume in 2025, the Emergency Department not only experienced exceptional patient volumes, but also achieved enhanced staff engagement and retention. These results underscore the effective implementation of the new structure, which directly addressed previous staffing and workflow challenges.

SHAWN PETTIS, BSN, RN, NE-BC

JEFFREY BOMBA, DNP, MBA, MSN, RN, NE-BC

A Model for Safety: Saint Vincent's 4 South ICU's Zero CAUTI/ CLABSI Success

Saint Vincent Hospital is proud to announce a remarkable achievement in patient safety: the absence of both Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infections (CAUTI) and Central Line-Associated Bloodstream Infections (CLABSI) throughout 2025 in the 4 South Intensive Care Unit. This significant milestone underscores our unwavering commitment to providing the highest quality of care and ensuring the well-being of our patients.

This success is not merely a stroke of luck, but a direct result of strategic initiatives and dedicated efforts launched in previous years. We are thrilled to report that as of the end of 2025, it has been over three years since our last CAUTI and over two years since our last CLABSI.

This exceptional performance is a testament to the foresight and dedication of our teams, particularly the impact of the Engagement Council, established in 2022, and the subsequent formation of Unit Based Quality Teams in 2023.

The Engagement Council, formed in 2022, played a pivotal role in fostering a culture of belonging and a supportive workplace. By bringing together a multidisciplinary team including frontline nurses, social workers, pharmacists, physical therapists, dietitians, and nursing assistants, the council created a robust platform for open communication, shared learning, and continuous improvement. Their collaborative approach demonstrated that targeted interventions focusing on praise, recognition, and team building can significantly enhance staff morale and engagement.

Building upon the foundation laid by the Engagement Council, the Unit Based Quality Teams, implemented in 2023, were instrumental in translating strategic goals into actionable improvements. These teams, led by clinical ladder nurses, composed of highly skilled nurses and clinical experts, focused specifically on evidence-based protocols for catheter insertion and maintenance, meticulous hand hygiene practices, Foley catheter removal and maintenance, and comprehensive staff education. Their rigorous monitoring, swift identification of potential risks, and continuous process refinement were critical in achieving these unprecedented results.

"This incredible achievement of zero CAUTI and CLABSI in 2025 is a direct reflection of the dedication and expertise of our entire nursing staff."

Jean Lindenberger, ICU Nurse Manager

"The Engagement Council's commitment to fostering a safety-first culture, coupled with the tireless efforts of our Quality Teams, has truly transformed our approach to infection prevention. We are incredibly proud of this collective accomplishment, which directly translates to better outcomes and a safer environment for every patient we serve."

JEAN LINDENBERGER, MSN, RN, CCRN
ICU/CCFP NURSE MANAGER

DOMINIQUE LEVIER, BSN, RN
COLLEEN SCHNAEKEL, BSN, RN, CCRN

West Penn Fostering an Employer of Choice Culture for Nurses

West Penn Hospital's recent expansion within AHN reflects far more than added bed capacity. It is a story of strategic growth designed to improve patient access, strengthen safety, and create an environment where nurses want to build their careers. Grounded in a fair and just culture, West Penn's approach has combined operational growth with a strong commitment to quality, patient experience, and workforce stability.

West Penn's growth strategy emerged from an urgent need across the network. Persistent boarding in Emergency Departments, particularly for patients requiring telemetry monitoring, created significant bottlenecks and limited the ability to accept transfers efficiently. West Penn was uniquely positioned to help address these challenges by expanding targeted capacity in progressive care and critical care while leveraging strong leadership, operational discipline, and a culture that supports professional growth. Just as importantly, the expansion created an opportunity to strengthen West Penn's reputation as a destination for nurses seeking both a supportive environment and the opportunity to care for high-acuity patients.

AUTUMN WRIGHT, BSN, RN
EMILY BOES, RN

KATELYN WILSON, BSN, RN

SHALEENA GARNER, RN

Expanding capacity with purpose

West Penn's success was driven by a phased, multidisciplinary approach. Support from AHN and Highmark Health corporate partners, including nursing finance, operations, and the internal staffing team, helped accelerate the opening of new units and ensure staffing support during transition periods.

The first major milestone was the opening of T9, a Progressive Care Unit that began phased operations in November 2024 under the leadership of Pamela Stegman, MSN, RN. Designed to relieve pressure on the Emergency Department and meet growing telemetry demand, T9 expanded to 20 beds and has remained at full capacity since opening. By July and August 2025, contingent workers on T9 had been fully replaced by permanent staff, demonstrating both the unit's success and its appeal to nurses seeking long-term opportunities at West Penn.

Building on that momentum, E8 Transfer Unit added 13 beds under the leadership of Alexandra Cherok, BSN, RN. The unit reached full capacity within 24 hours of opening, further improving the hospital's ability to decompress telemetry demand and accept transfers. Strategic oversight from Anna Marie Pozycki, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Director of Nursing Operations, helped ensure successful implementation across both T9 and E8.

West Penn also expanded critical care capacity through the MICU and T4/E7 strategy, led by Nicole Roncone, BSN, RN, CCRN, with oversight from David Lau, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC, Director of Nursing and Emergency Services. This work addressed rising patient acuity, particularly for Medical Services and BMT Oncology. Open for just over a month, the MICU has already exceeded its initial census target of 12, with an average daily census of 14, while the SICU has maintained an average daily census of 13. These results have supported continued business planning for future growth.

Building a workplace where nurses thrive

What distinguishes West Penn's expansion is that growth in capacity has been matched by intentional investment in culture. Leadership has worked to hardwire bedside shift report, visible rounding, and multidisciplinary collaboration across units to strengthen communication, support patient safety, and improve the patient experience. At the same time, unit leaders have focused on building a workplace where nurses feel supported, heard, and empowered to grow.

That commitment is reflected in several ways: a rapid transition from contingent workers to permanent staff, strong support for professional development and clinical ladder participation, active unit councils and daily huddles, accessible leadership, and flexible scheduling practices that promote work-life balance. West Penn has also invested in recruitment and mentorship, successfully onboarding 15 new graduate nurses while partnering with corporate and union leaders on incentive strategies to support staffing in critical care areas.

At its core, this work is about improving care for patients while building a stronger future for nursing. Through deliberate expansion, disciplined planning, and a culture that values both excellence and people, West Penn has helped reduce network bottlenecks, improve access to care, and create an environment where nurses can thrive. The result is a compelling example of how growth, patient care, and workforce strategy can advance together.

Wexford Hospital: A Legacy of Excellence and Patient-Centered Care

The foundation of Wexford Hospital's sustained top-tier recognition lies in the commitment to implementing evidence-based tools focused on quality outcomes. This dedication has resulted in consecutive Leapfrog Grade A ratings in Fall/Spring 2024 and 2025, alongside achieving CMS 5-Star ratings for both years.

Wexford Hospital has also earned a remarkable three-peat Guardian of Excellence Award for patient experience across Inpatient and Emergency Department settings in 2023, 2024, and 2025. CORE achievements consist of Titanium Award status since opening (three-peat recognition), being recognized as a top-performing hospital (third place) in 2025, and celebrating a record-breaking year for organ donations.

Wexford's commitment to optimal treatment is exemplified in stroke therapy, having earned the American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines Stroke Bronze Achievement Award. Its expertise has received international recognition, with acceptance to the International Stroke Conference for four consecutive years. Regionally, its work has been acknowledged with a second-place achievement at Southwestern Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (SWPONL) for three consecutive years, and acceptance for a poster presentation at the Emergency Nurses Association.

At the core of these achievements is Wexford's implementation of bedside shift report. This patient-centered approach transforms care transfer by bringing nurses directly to the patient's room to exchange vital information. This enhances patient safety through accurate, real-time communication regarding medical status, treatment plans, and potential concerns, directly involving the patient. Beyond clinical benefits, bedside shift report actively engages patients and their families, empowering them to ask questions and fostering greater control and understanding. This transparency builds trust, reduces anxiety, and directly contributes to improved patient experience scores.

Complementing bedside shift report is Wexford Hospital's framework for multidisciplinary rounding. This initiative convenes a diverse team of health care professionals — including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and therapists — to collectively review and strategize care. This collaborative approach reduces silos, fostering a holistic understanding of patient needs.

During these rounds, the team develops integrated care plans, addresses discharge barriers, and proactively anticipates future needs. This optimizes clinical outcomes, streamlines processes for efficient lengths of stay, and improves resource utilization. The patient-centric nature of multidisciplinary rounding further enhances the patient experience by providing a unified message, demonstrating a coordinated approach to their well-being.

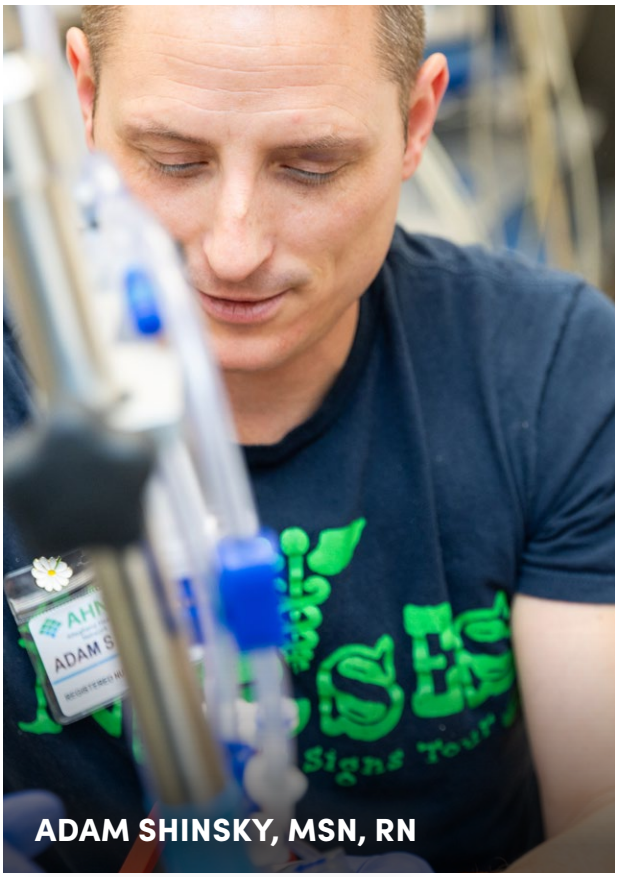
The success of these initiatives is amplified by Wexford's integrated partnerships. These extend beyond the immediate care team to community organizations and post-acute care facilities. Seamless information exchange with skilled nursing facilities and home health agencies ensures smooth care transitions post-discharge, reducing readmission rates and improving long-term outcomes.

Partnerships with community support services address social determinants of health, providing patients with access to resources that support overall welfare. These integrated partnerships create a cohesive ecosystem of care, reinforcing the patient's journey and contributing to sustained positive outcomes.

Wexford Hospital's consistent achievement of top-tier ratings and awards is a direct testament to the synergistic influence of bedside shift report, multidisciplinary rounding, and integrated partnerships. These initiatives collectively foster a culture of patient-centered care, clinical excellence, and continuous improvement, ultimately delivering unparalleled quality and satisfaction for those they serve.

BRIANNA STADTFELD, RN
OLIVIA KRON, RN

Beyond Staffing: IST's Role in Nurturing ED Talent


ADAM SHINSKY, MSN, RN

The Inpatient Staffing Team (IST) has been a vital resource, supporting staffing needs across AHN since 2022. In 2025, we strategically expanded IST's functionality by dedicating a portion of our Emergency Department (ED) IST nurses to focus specifically on the orientation and retention of new hire staff within the Forbes Emergency Department (ED).

Given the unique complexities of the ED specialty and the extensive experience required to effectively orient new personnel, the IST eagerly embraced this challenge to support the new ED nurses joining AHN. Eight dedicated IST nurses completed the comprehensive TSAM Preceptor training course, enabling them to successfully orient multiple new hires in the Forbes ED, working collaboratively with the existing Forbes team.

A significant benefit of this initiative was the enhanced capacity it provided to Forbes ED, allowing them to onboard additional new hires who would not have been able to receive adequate training support otherwise. This strategic deployment of IST resources proved instrumental in bolstering the Forbes ED's staffing capabilities and ensuring a robust orientation experience for their new team members.

"The collaboration with the IST ED nurses, specifically the strategic integration of dedicated TSAM-trained ED Preceptors, proved to be an exceptionally efficient and highly effective solution for simultaneously onboarding multiple new graduate nurses," said Julie Webb, manager of the Forbes Hospital Emergency Department. "The specialized support of eight IST ED nurses in conjunction with Forbes ED nurses was not just beneficial, but truly essential to successfully orient new hires and provide an optimal learning experience."

Crucially, this program has also yielded a lasting benefit: We now have eight TSAM-trained preceptors within the IST who can be strategically utilized to support emergency departments across the entire AHN network, further strengthening our organizational capacity for effective new hire orientation and retention.

KELLY BECK, RN, CEN

Solving the Surgical Tech Shortage: An Innovative Internal Pipeline

The critical shortage of qualified surgical technologists presents a significant challenge for health care facilities, directly impacting surgical capacity and patient care. Recognizing this urgent need and declining enrollment in traditional degree programs, our organization has strategically invested in the development of an innovative, internal professional development program designed to cultivate a robust pipeline of highly skilled surgical technologists.

This comprehensive six-month on-the-job training initiative combines a commercial, didactic curriculum provided by MedCerts with live instruction from two dedicated educators. The program integrates multimodal learning experiences, including expert-led presentations, hands-on training from vendor representatives, extensive hands-on practice simulation labs, and immersive clinical rotations culminating in certification as a surgical technologist.

Program participants are hired as surgical technologist trainees for the duration of the six-month program working 40-hour weeks by attending eight-hour didactic training days and eight-hour clinical rotation days. Trainees are required to log 125 cases in the first scrub role and successfully complete the didactic program to be eligible to sit for the national certification exam.

Participants in the first cohort are thriving in the program.

They are eager to learn and excited to apply the knowledge as practical skills in the clinical setting, demonstrating competence as they assist with surgical procedures and fulfill the role of a patient advocate. The program highlights a critical investment in the professional development of internal staff. By leveraging internal talent and providing a structured pathway for career progression, this program not only addresses a critical workforce shortage, but also fosters employee loyalty and professional growth.

MONICA LANIER, SURGICAL TECH TRAINEE (STUDENT)

Enhancing Patient Experience Through AHN Living Health

IRMA D'ANTONIO, DNP, RN, NE-BC, DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND NURSING EDUCATION

In 2025, a comprehensive system-wide initiative, Living Health, was designed to revolutionize patient engagement and care delivery by seamlessly integrating best practices in communication and patient education. This training was launched to over 8,000 staff. At its core, Living Health prioritizes the human connection, leveraging principles of teach-back, care narration, and empathy to foster shared understanding and empower patients in their health journey.

A critical component of this rollout involved extensive instruction for patient-facing employees. This includes the development and deployment of interactive video modules featuring our own nursing staff and demonstrating best-practice applications of the teach-back method.

These segments illustrate how to effectively confirm patient comprehension of complex medical information, medication instructions, and self-care techniques, ensuring adherence and reducing preventable readmissions. More importantly, using teach-back techniques ensures patients are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to manage their health.

Living Health also emphasizes the power of care narration, encouraging providers to articulate the "why" behind care decisions, fostering transparency and building trust. This narrative approach, coupled with a deep commitment to empathetic communication, creates a more supportive and person-centered care environment.

Uniquely positioned through Living Health, AHN capitalizes on emerging technological advancements, such as telehealth platforms, without sacrificing the irreplaceable human element. By integrating these innovations with a steadfast focus on teach-back, care narration, and empathy, we aim to enhance patient understanding, improve health outcomes, and solidify our commitment to a holistic, connected, and digitally enabled health care experience for every individual we serve. This initiative ensures that, while technology optimizes efficiency, the core of our practice remains rooted in compassionate, clear, and comprehensive patient-nurse relationships.

From Classroom to Care: Scaling AHN's Nursing Talent Pipeline

AHN's Schools of Nursing are fueling growth across the network by expanding the pipeline of practice-ready nurses at a time when the workforce challenge remains intense throughout Pennsylvania. For the 2025 to 2026 academic year, AHN's two nursing schools, the West Penn School of Nursing in Bloomfield and the Citizens School of Nursing in Tarentum, reported record-breaking enrollment with 355 students beginning class on August 18, with an additional 43 students that joined the cohort in January 2026.

This growth is meaningful both in scale and trajectory. Enrollment increased from 228 students in 2023 to 323 students in 2024, reaching 355 students for 2025 to 2026. This represents a 44% increase in total enrollment since 2023 and underscores the momentum behind this strategy.

The composition of the class also reflects a deliberate approach to growth, with 164 students at West Penn and 191 at Citizens, including both full-time and part-time learners.

A key driver of this success is program flexibility that makes nursing education accessible to a broader population.

Full-time students complete a 22-month program that blends classroom learning with hands-on clinical experience, while the part-time pathway offers evening and weekend options over 32 months to meet the needs of working adults and nontraditional students.

Since launching in January 2024, the part-time program at Citizens has grown rapidly, increasing 125% from 2024 to 2025, with continued growth anticipated.

Beyond access, this is growth with impact. Rising enrollment reflects the schools' strong reputations, supportive learning environment, high job placement, and the value of clinical experiences across AHN hospitals. Dedicated faculty, favorable instructor-to-student ratios, and an innovative approach to nursing education continue to attract top talent and help meet the region's need for qualified nurses. Collectively, these record enrollments and expanded part-time pathways represent a clear growth engine for AHN, strengthening the workforce pipeline and positioning the network to meet patient needs today and into the future.

HAILEY ROBINSON, NURSING STUDENT

JAKE WINTERS, NURSING STUDENT

LASON DUNCAN, AHN

Patient Safety and Efficiency: The Power of Digital Sitters at AHN

As we reflect on the achievements of 2025, AHN is proud to highlight a transformative initiative that has significantly enhanced patient safety while simultaneously delivering substantial financial benefits: the strategic implementation of digital sitters. This innovative approach is reshaping how we provide continuous patient monitoring, demonstrating our commitment to both exceptional care and operational excellence.

For years, the role of a patient sitter has been invaluable, providing a crucial layer of safety for patients at higher risk of falls, self-harm, or other adverse events. Traditionally, this has been a one-to-one model: one in-person sitter dedicated to one patient. While effective, this model presents logistical and financial challenges, particularly in an environment of increasing patient acuity and staffing demands.

Enter the digital sitter. This groundbreaking technology allows a single trained professional to remotely monitor up to 12 patients simultaneously.

Imagine the impact: a dedicated team member leveraging advanced technology and providing constant vigilance for a dozen patients who might otherwise require individual, in-person supervision. This dramatic increase in efficiency directly translates to improved resource allocation and, most importantly, enhanced patient safety across our facilities.

A year of strategic evolution: From AvaSure to Care.ai

Throughout 2025, AHN successfully utilized AvaSure cameras to connect our inpatient units to our digital sitter teams. This initial implementation provided valuable insights and demonstrated the immense potential of remote patient monitoring. Building on this success, AHN is now poised for an even more significant leap forward with the rollout of Care.ai technology across all AHN hospitals.

This transition marks a pivotal moment in our digital sitter program. The Care.ai model will eliminate the need for the existing AvaSure camera infrastructure, streamlining our technology and expanding our capabilities. This means:

Enhanced monitoring capacity: Care.ai offers advanced features that will further optimize the digital sitter's ability to monitor a greater number of patients across AHN effectively.

Seamless integration: The new system will provide a more integrated and user-friendly experience for both our digital sitters and clinical staff.

Significant cost savings: The strategic decision to transition from AvaSure to Care.ai will result in substantial financial benefits for AHN.

The Financial Impact: A Million-Dollar Saving Initiative

The financial implications of this transition are remarkable. The previous AvaSure contracts, with a renewal price of $10,308 per device per year in 2025 (and a 3% annual increase to $10,618 in 2026), represented a considerable operational cost. With 76 such devices in use, the annual expenditure was substantial.

By moving to the Care.ai model, AHN is not only enhancing our technological capabilities, but also realizing a direct and significant financial gain.

The elimination of these AvaSure contracts will generate an impressive annual saving of approximately $806,929. This nearly million-dollar saving can be reinvested directly into patient care, staff development, and other critical initiatives across the network.

Looking ahead to a brighter, safer future

The success of our digital sitter program, culminating in the strategic shift to Care.ai, exemplifies AHN's commitment to innovation in health care. We are not just adopting technology; we are strategically integrating solutions that drive both superior patient outcomes and sustainable financial health.

The expansion of our digital sitter program, powered by Care.ai, represents a significant step forward in our mission to provide the highest quality, safest care to our community. It's a testament to our team's foresight, dedication, and willingness to embrace innovative solutions that redefine the future of health care.

Clinicians and Finance Use Tools to Drive Savings

When nursing teams are stretched, the goal is not simply to fill shifts — it is to protect safe staffing, sustain morale, and keep beds available for the patients who rely on us. In 2022, the post-pandemic workforce environment intensified an already challenging reality. Turnover accelerated while patient volume increased, and the need for external agency support rose to levels previously unseen across our hospitals.

To respond with both speed and discipline, Nursing Finance and Network Clinical Nursing Operations strengthened a partnership grounded in trust, shared definitions, and transparent data.

Under the leadership of Annie Ricciardi, Director of Finance, and Staci Saunders, Director, Network Clinical Nursing Operations, this work leveraged a key foundation already in place across the network: standardized nursing grids that define clinically appropriate staffing levels in a consistent format. That standardization made it possible to move from reactive decision-making to a clearer, system-wide view of current and projected staffing needs.

As AHN President Mark Sevco has previously stated, "You have to see the target to hit it." With that goal in mind and building on our foundation, Ricciardi and Saunders partnered with nurse leaders across the hospitals to develop the RN Vacancy Calculator, a practical tool that translates complex staffing information into an actionable picture for leaders.

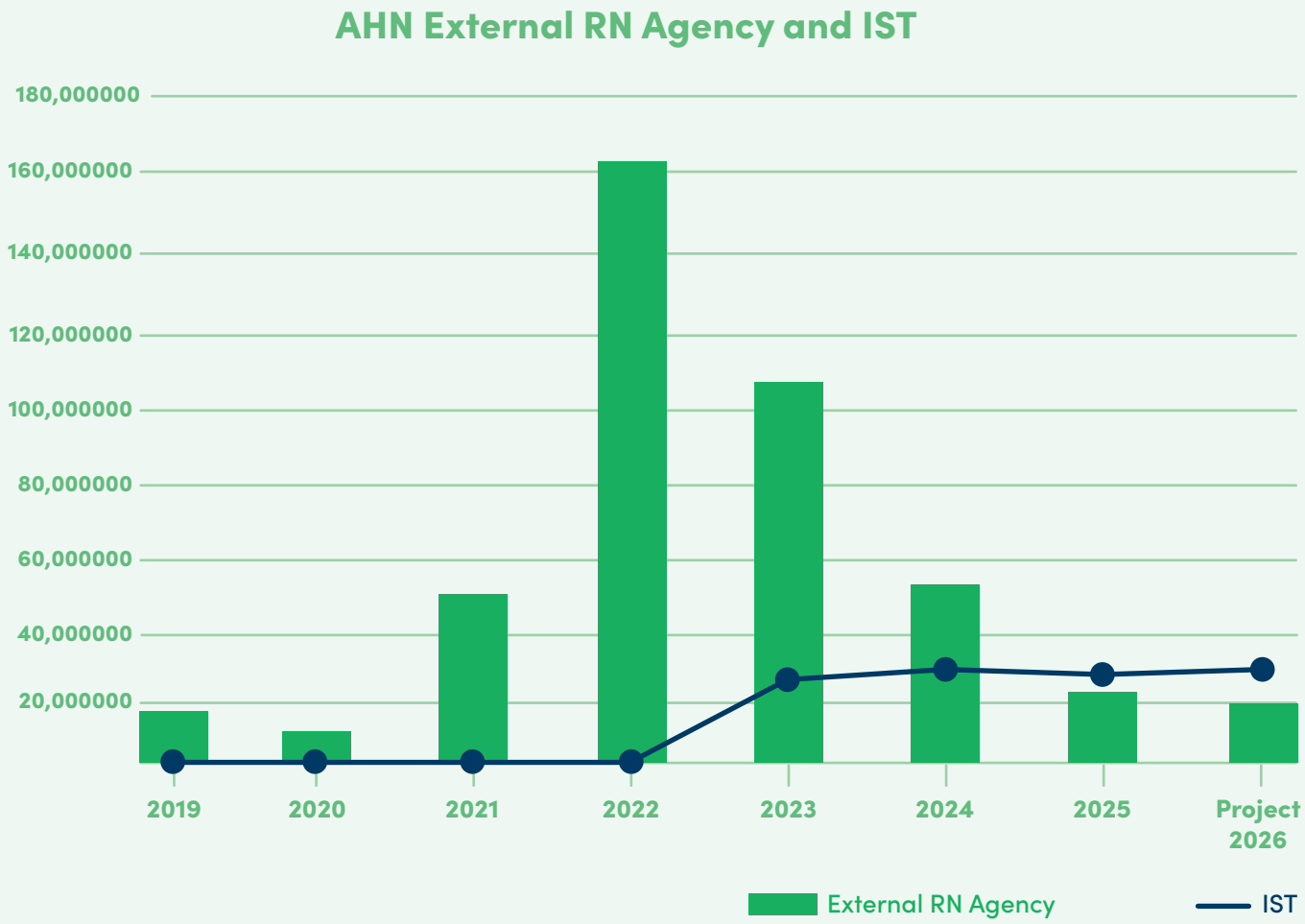
Nurse managers contributed ongoing, detailed data about their teams, and those inputs were visualized to show staffing needs by unit, current resources, and the outlook in the weeks ahead. With that visibility, leaders aligned on clear decision rules to guide when agency support was truly required and, just as importantly, when it could be reduced or removed. A calculated starting-point vacancy percentage helped balance clinical responsibility with the financial strain of agency labor and ensured external staffing was used only where needed and for the shortest time possible.

The impact has been significant. In 2022, external RN agency expenses across the 10 hospitals reached $162 million.

With the continued use of this approach and better staffing visibility, that cost is expected to drop to $19 million in 2026, representing an 88% reduction.

This progress reflects more than a single tool. It represents nurse leaders creating environments where nurses want to stay, workforce teams improving recruiting and hiring processes, and the continued strengthening of the pipeline through education and development.

Through Ricciardi's and Saunders' leadership and partnership with operational teams, the RN Vacancy Calculator remains an actionable way to connect these strategies to daily decisions, helping leaders anticipate needs; deploy resources responsibly; and sustain safe, reliable care for our communities.


AHN External RN Agency and IST
180,000000
160,000000
140,000000
120,000000
100,000000
80,000000
60,000000
40,000000
20,000000
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025
Project 2026
External RN Agency
IST

STACI SAUNDERS, MSN, RN, NE-BC
ANNIE RICCIARDI, MACC

Language accessibility and nondiscrimination

Allegheny Health Network (AHN) complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex in its health programs and services. In order to treat individuals in a nondiscriminatory manner, AHN provides free communication aids and language assistance services.

Albanian
KUJDES: Nëse flitni shqip, për ju ka në dispozicion shërbime të asistencës gjuhësore, pa pagesë. Telefononi në 412-359-3131.

Arabic
ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اذكر اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم 412-359-3131.

Bengali
লক্ষ্য করুনঃ যদি আপনি বাংলা, কথা বলতে পারনে, তাহলে নিঃখরচায় ভাষা সহায়তা পরিষেবা উপলব্ধ আছে। ফোন করুন ১. 412-359-3131.

Chinese
注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 412-359-3131.

French
ATTENTION: Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 412-359-3131.

French Creole
ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 412-359-3131.

German
ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 412-359-3131.

Greek
ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ: Αν μιλάτε ελληνικά, στη διάθεσή σας βρίσκονται υπηρεσίες γλωσσικής υποστήριξης, οι οποίες παρέχονται δωρεάν. Καλέστε 412-359-3131.

Gujarati
સુચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિઃશુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 412-359-3131.

Italian
ATTENZIONE: In caso la lingua parlata sia l'italiano, sono disponibili servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti. Chiamare il numero 412-359-3131.

Korean
주의: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 번으로 전화해 주십시오. 412-359-3131.

Mon-Khmer
ប្រយ័ត្ន៖ បើសិនជាអ្ននកនិយាយ ភាសាខ្មមរ៉ៃ, សេវាជំនួយផ្ទនកែភ្ជាសា ជាយមិនគិតឈ្នួល គឺអាចមានសរាប់បរ៉ីអ្ននក។ ចូរ ទូរស័ព្ទ 412-359-3131.

Nepali
ध्यान दिनुहोस्: यदि तपाई नेपाली भाषा बोल्नुहुन्छ भने, तपाईंका लागि भाषा सहायता सेवाहरू नि:शुल्क उपलब्ध हुन्छन्। 412-359-3131 मा फोन गर्नुहोस्।

Pennsylvania Dutch
Wann du Deitsch schwetzscht, kannscht du mitaus Koschte ebber gricke, ass dihr helft mit die englisch Schprooch. Ruf selli Nummer uff: call 412-359-3131.

Polish
UWAGA: Jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 412-359-3131.

Portuguese
ATENÇÃO: Se fala português, encontram-se disponíveis serviços linguísticos, grátis. Ligue para 412-359-3131.

Russian
ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните 412-359-3131.

Spanish
ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 412-359-3131.

Tagalog
PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 412-359-3131.

Urdu
خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں ۔ کال کریں 412-359-3131.

Vietnamese
CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 412-359-3131.

Yiddish
אויפמערקזאם: אויב איר רעדט אידיש, זענען פארהאן פאר אייך שפראך הילף סערוויסעס פריי פון אפצאל. רופט 412-359-3131.

HMDES
120 Fifth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222