

Navigating the Perfect Storm: Staffing Crisis During the Pandemic

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Navigating the Perfect Storm: Staffing Crisis During the Pandemic

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Background

With increasing patient volumes, increased complexity of patients and staffing below labor budget, our ability to provide patient care was compromised. As leaders we utilize data and facts to drive decisions. Staffing was 15% below budgeted labor and patient volumes were exceeding 130% of projected census across 5 locations.

Objective

It was our goal as the nutrition leadership team to address this staffing crisis in a proactive manner to curb the magnitude of the storm.

Method

A team brainstorming session was conducted to identify strategies to provide quality care for our patients and prevent staff burnout.

A rapid improvement event was held resulting in a streamlined electronic nutrition assessment to improve charting efficiency. Outreach to recently separated employees occurred to ascertain interest in working remotely as a per diem dietitian utilizing telehealth technology. Staff were incentivized with a bonus to work additional hours and for traveling to a hospital location one hour from the main hospital.

Results

With the program implemented, the team achieved a charting compliance of 96%. In addition, the team also supported optimizing quality of nutrition care for COVID-19 patients by updating practice guidelines.

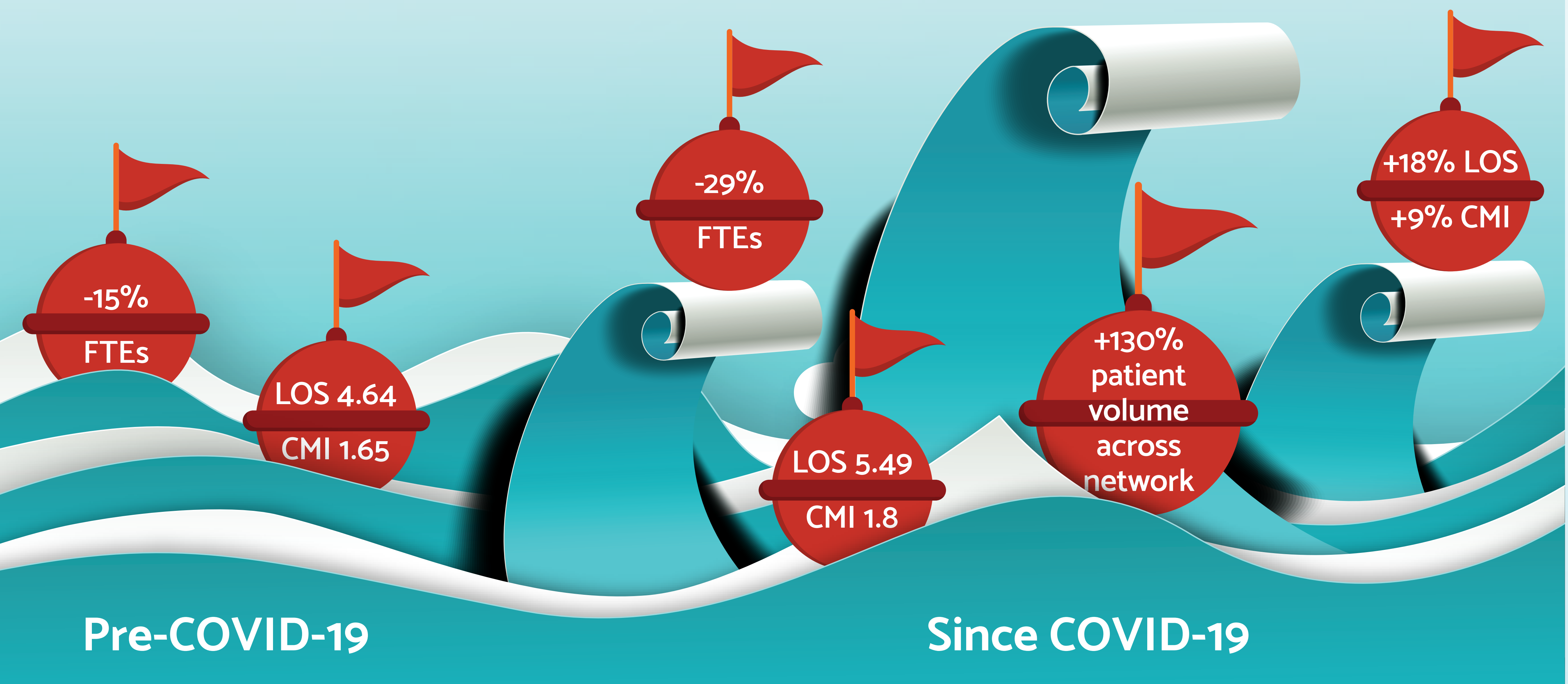
Conclusion

The team felt valued and appreciated which resulted in improved morale, trusting work environment and a willingness to weather the storm as a united front.

- Pre-COVID: 15% below budgeted full-time employees (FTEs)
- COVID-19: up to 29% below budgeted FTEs
- 130% increase in volume across network since COVID-19 with 3 additional sites

Increased Average Length of Stay (LOS) and Case Mix Index (CMI):

Pre-Covid: 4.64 LOS and 1.65 CMI
Covid: 5.49 LOS and 1.8 CMI
= 18% increase in LOS
with a 9% increase in CMI



Testimonials of team

The bonus program was a great way to receive additional compensation for our efforts during a busy time period/high census at the hospital. It allowed for decrease in stress knowing other employees were willing to assist outside of their contracted hours.
Alyse Ernst, RD, LDN, CNSC

The ability to volunteer for additional hours and be compensated above our salary made me feel that my contributions and desire to care for our patients was valued by our leadership and motivated me to work above and beyond my regular work week.
Catherine Carter, MS, RD, LDN, CSP

Getting bonus pay for working additional hours made me feel appreciated as an employee!
Suzanne Ickes, RDN, CNSC