# Innovation Report

Washington Association for Community Health

Moses Lake Community Health Center
"Healthcare with a Heart"

## Buddy System Workforce Initiative

Moses Lake Community Health Center (MLCHC) developed the Buddy System Workforce Initiative in response to a clearly defined workforce challenge. While the organization maintains a strong base of long-tenured employees, it has difficulty retaining new hires beyond their first year.



MLCHC's Human Resource department identified a key trend—employees who remained in their position for 12 months were highly likely to stay long-term. This insight highlighted a critical opportunity to strengthen retention efforts by supporting employees during the transition period between initial hire and that one-year milestone.

To address this need, MLCHC implemented a structured, relationship-centered approach by pairing new hires with experienced staff mentors. This "buddy system" provides new employees with immediate, accessible support from individuals within their department who understand both the role and the organization.

The onboarding experience itself has been expanded into a comprehensive and layered approach. New employees are introduced to their specific roles, but also to broader organizational practices and structure. Regular check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days are paired with targeted surveys and allow the recruitment and HR teams to proactively identify and address challenges before they lead to turnover. Formal performance discussions are intentionally separated, ensuring that new hires feel safe providing honest feedback without concern for evaluation.

Throughout the process, the organization encountered challenges common to onboarding redesign—ensuring consistency across departments, addressing information overload for new hires, and identifying issues early enough to intervene effectively. These challenges led to important refinements.

The success of the Buddy System Workforce Initiative lies in its simplicity and intentionality—using relationships, data, and structured feedback to solve a persistent workforce challenge.

**To learn more about MLCHC's Buddy System Workforce Initiative, read the full report.**

*This publication is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling $1,011,178 with 0% financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.*