

## Penn Highlands DuBois

### 2025 HAP Achievement Award Workforce Innovators Award—Small/Medium Division

#### Journey to Pathway to Excellence by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) in a Rural Setting

##### The Goal

Facing persistent challenges with staff recruitment, retention, and siloed communication, a rural Pennsylvania hospital pursued the Pathway to Excellence® designation. Initial efforts began in 2015, but progress accelerated in 2022 with a more structured approach to strengthen nursing engagement and workforce stability.

##### The Intervention

The Pathway to Excellence® designation requires hospitals to demonstrate how nurses uphold six standards of excellence. To meet this goal, the hospital launched a focused engagement strategy that included staff education, unit-based champions, and targeted rounding informed by a self-assessment survey. The team used creative themes and interactive activities to make education memorable and engaging. Frontline nurses played a central role by contributing real examples of how the standards were reflected in daily practice, fostering strong awareness, ownership, and organizational buy-in. This collaborative, nurse-led approach ensured the program was embedded throughout all levels of the organization.





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## 2025 Achievement Award—Penn Highlands DuBois

Page 2



### Results

The hospital achieved Pathway to Excellence® designation with 71 percent staff participation, meeting all American Nursing Credentialing Center criteria and earning a four-year certification, making it one of the few rural hospitals to receive this recognition. The hospital, in partnership with American Nurses Credentialing Center, will continue advancing nursing excellence and preparing for future re-designation.