



Revitalizing Workforce Engagement & Retention: Modernizing the Pharmacy Career Ladder

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Learning Objectives



At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Recall the key components of a large health system Career Ladder, including its tiered structure, transparent pathway for professional growth and strategic use of mentoring.
2. Identify elements of the Career Ladder to adapt and implement to promote workforce engagement, foster professional growth, and improve retention rates within a pharmacy department.
3. Recognize the impact of structured career progression, mentorship and education in creating a supportive work environment on co-worker retention within a health system.

Mercy Demographics



- Hospital Pharmacies (24 hour/onsite): **13**
- Non 24 hour hospitals w/ off-site coverage after hours (Smaller Hospital / Critical Access) : **32**
- Hospital Based Oncology/OP Infusion/ASC Pharmacies: **15**
- Ambulatory Pharmacies: **61**
- Retail/Specialty Prescriptions (annually): **2.6 million**
- Hospital Medication Orders: **23.8 million annually**
- Drug Spend: **\$ 1.4 billion**
- Pharmacy Coworkers: **over 1,200**
- 340b Program Participation
 - DSH Facilities: **10**
 - RRC Facilities: **2**
 - CAH Facilities: **17**
 - *Contract Pharmacy Relationship Pairs:* **31**



Headquartered in St. Louis with a multi-state footprint. Mercy is one of the largest Catholic health systems in the US.	1827 founded
Outreach ministries in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.	45 hospitals
Mercy's IT division, Mercy Technology Services and Mercy Virtual commercially serve providers & patients from coast to coast.	948 physician practices & outpatient facilities
Serving millions each year.	4,700 integrated providers ¹
	45,000 co-workers
	\$8B revenue

¹providers includes physicians and advanced practice clinicians

Source: Mercy Healthcare data. CY2023/Annual Stats (with August 2024 updates)
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 Image: Mercy Marketing Dept. Used with Permission



Photo courtesy of Fire Mountain Scout Reservation; used with permission.

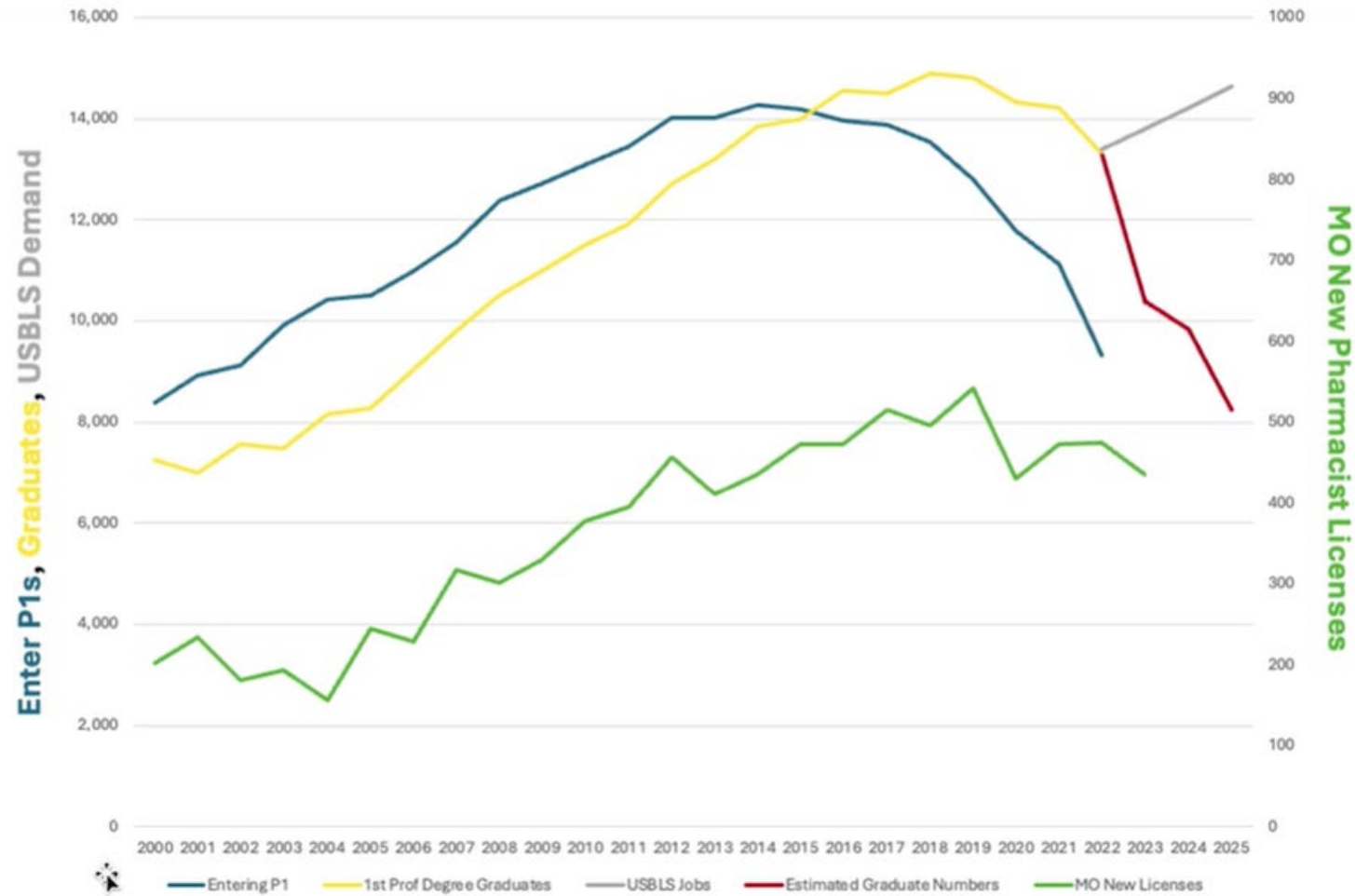
The Looming Cliff of a Pharmacist Shortage



Photo courtesy of Daniel Good,; used with permission.



The Looming Cliff of a Pharmacist Shortage



Source: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics – accessed June 2024.

Our Mercy Approach

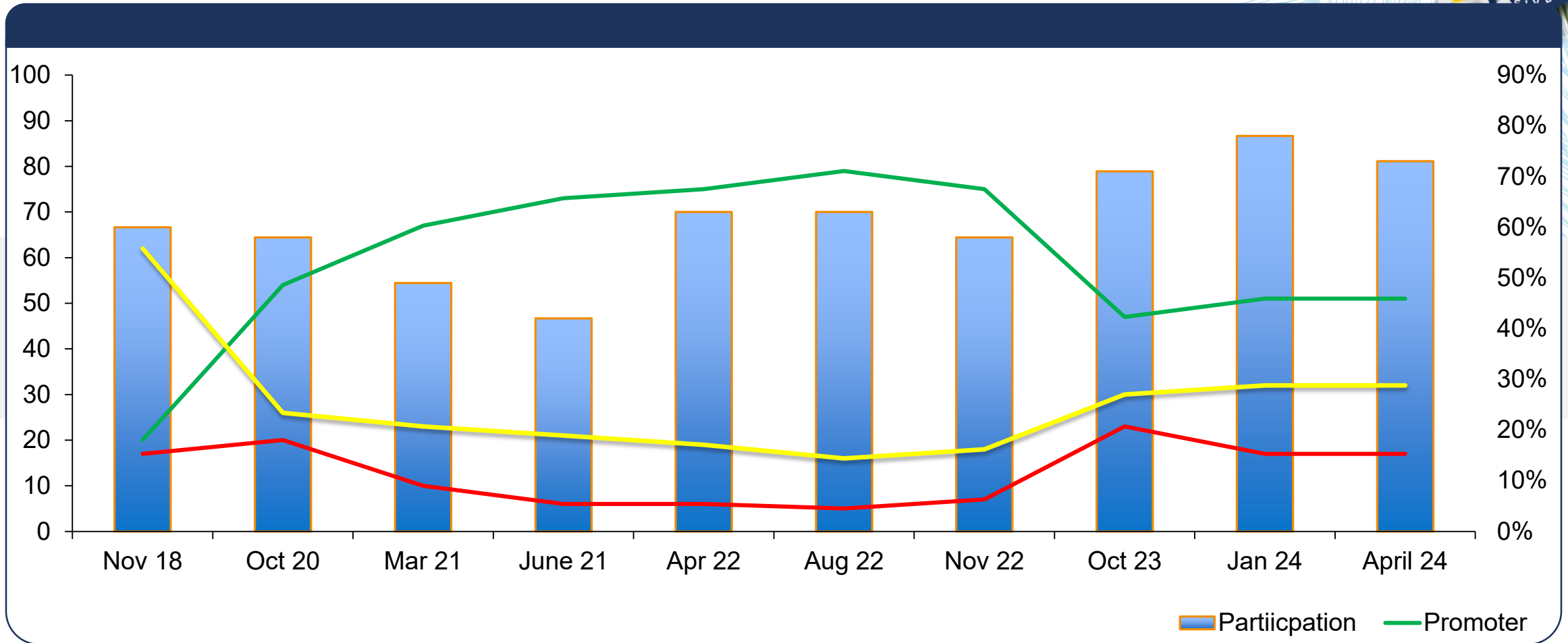


- Pay practices
- Recruiting strategies
- Talent assessment
- Training programs
- Evaluations
- Work conditions
- Co-worker engagement
- Co-worker satisfaction
- Mentoring



Source: Mercy Marketing; used with Permission

Co-worker Engagement & Satisfaction



Source: Mercy WorkDay Peakon Report accessed May 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission from HealthTrust

Technician Workforce Trends



2020

- COVID & assessment of personal health risks
- For profit companies able to pay higher wages and incentives in the pandemic (fast food, grocery)

2021

- ASHP Survey:
 - 21–30% turnover rates
 - 10% of directors report losing 41% of technician workforce even with strong job satisfaction rates

2022

- NCPA Survey
 - >70% of pharmacies struggling to fill staff positions

2024

- While pandemic resides, the labor pool continues to be shallow for skilled pharmacy technicians

Sources: ASHP Workforce Report 2021
National Community Pharmacy Association, accessed May 2024

Pharmacy Technician Turnover



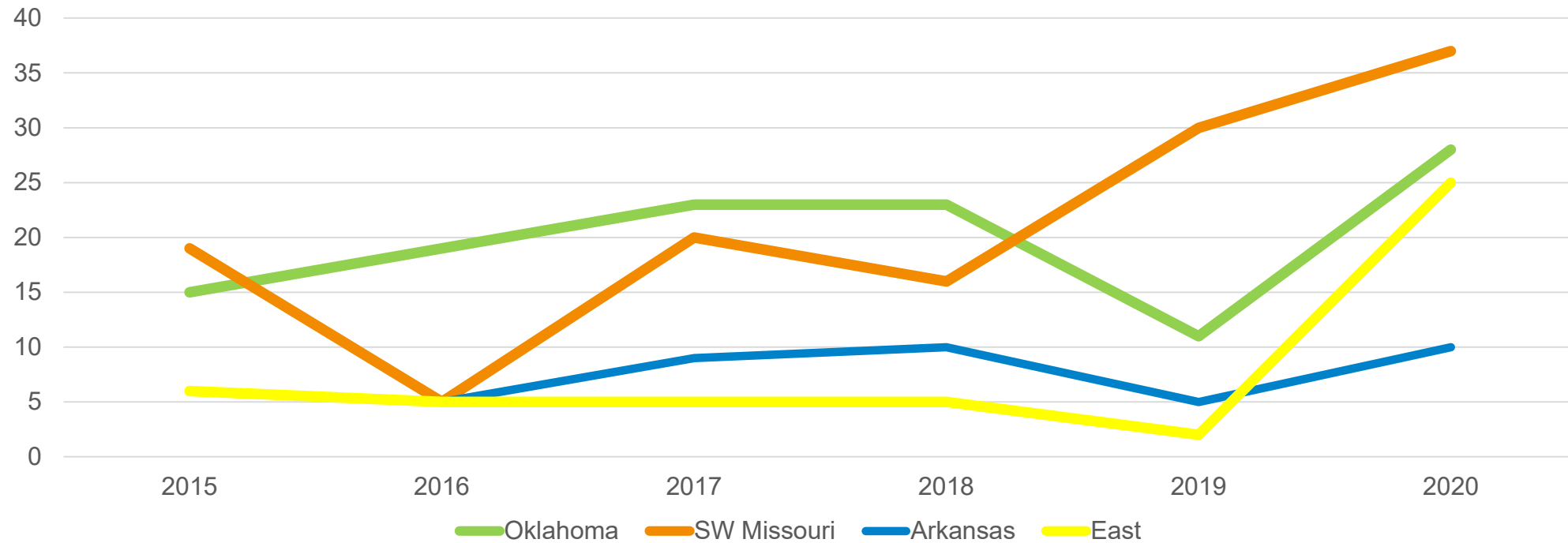
2020 | 109 Pharmacy Technicians separated

2021 | 139 Pharmacy Technicians separated

>46% | first-year turnover

Source: Mercy WorkDay Dashboard Report accessed May 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Openings – Pre-ladder

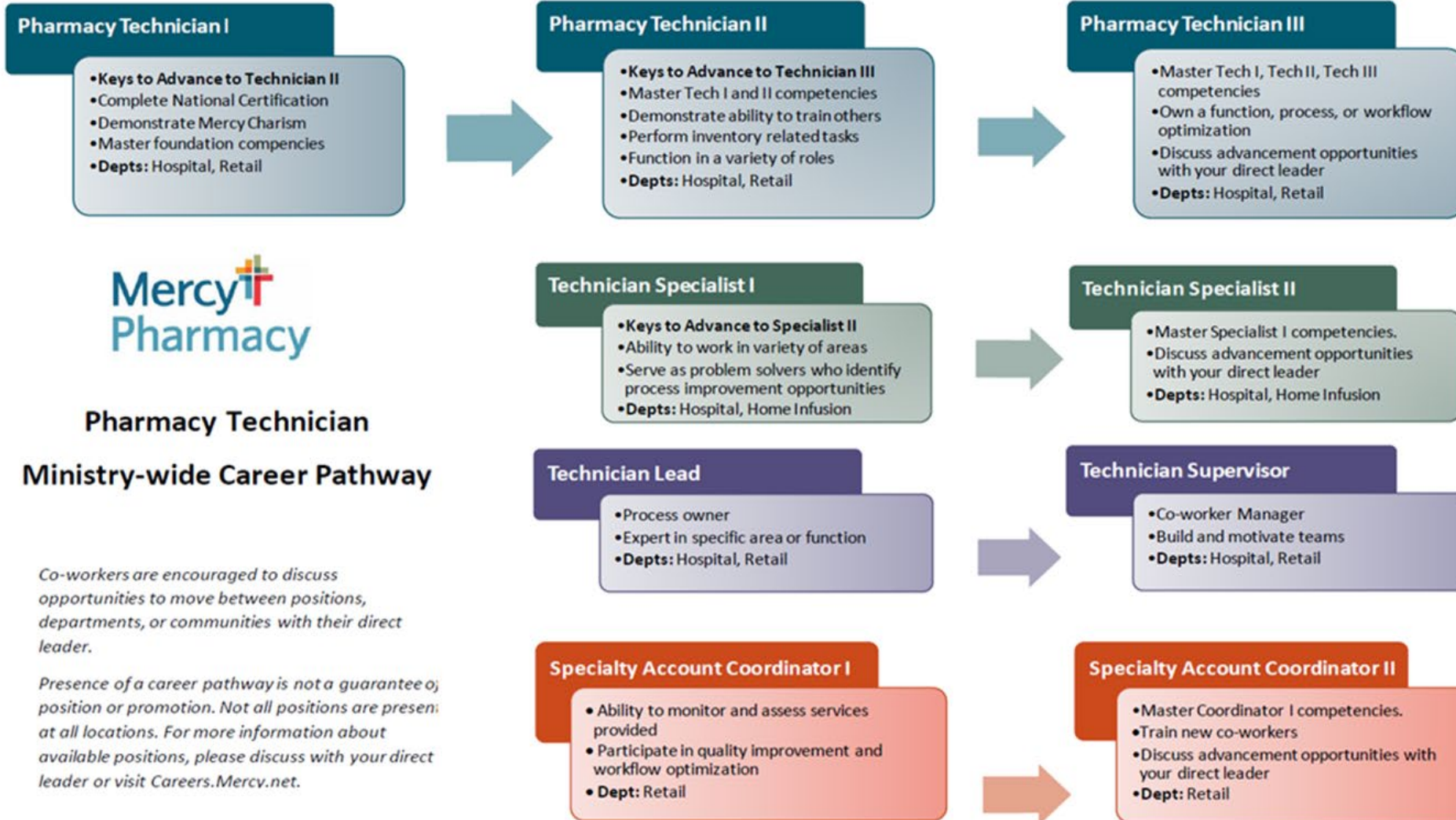


Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Technician Career Ladder



Pharmacy Technician Career Pathway



Pharmacy Technician

Ministry-wide Career Pathway

Co-workers are encouraged to discuss opportunities to move between positions, departments, or communities with their direct leader.

Presence of a career pathway is not a guarantee of position or promotion. Not all positions are present at all locations. For more information about available positions, please discuss with your direct leader or visit [Careers.Mercy.net](https://careers.mercy.net).

Pharmacy Technician Career Growth Program



Pharmacy Tech I

- Complete national certification
- Demonstrate Mercy charism
- Master foundational competencies

Pharmacy Tech II

- Master Tech I and II competencies
- Demonstrate ability to train others
- Perform inventory related tasks
- Function in a variety of roles

Pharmacy Tech III

- Master Tech I, Tech II & Tech III competencies
- Own a function, process or workflow optimization
- Discuss advancement opportunities with your direct leader

Source: Mercy Career Ladder 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Career Growth Program



Technician Specialist I

- Ability to work in a variety of areas
- Specialized skillset for technology or platform
- Serve as problem solvers who identify process improvement opportunities

Technician Specialist II

- Master Specialist I competencies
- Discuss advancement opportunities with your direct leader
- Specific leadership of process or area without personnel management

Source: Mercy Career Ladder 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Career Growth Program



Technician Lead

- Process owner
- Expert in specific area or function

Technician Supervisor

- Co-worker supervision
- Build and motivate teams

Source: Mercy Career Ladder 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Career Growth Program



Specialty Account Coordinator I

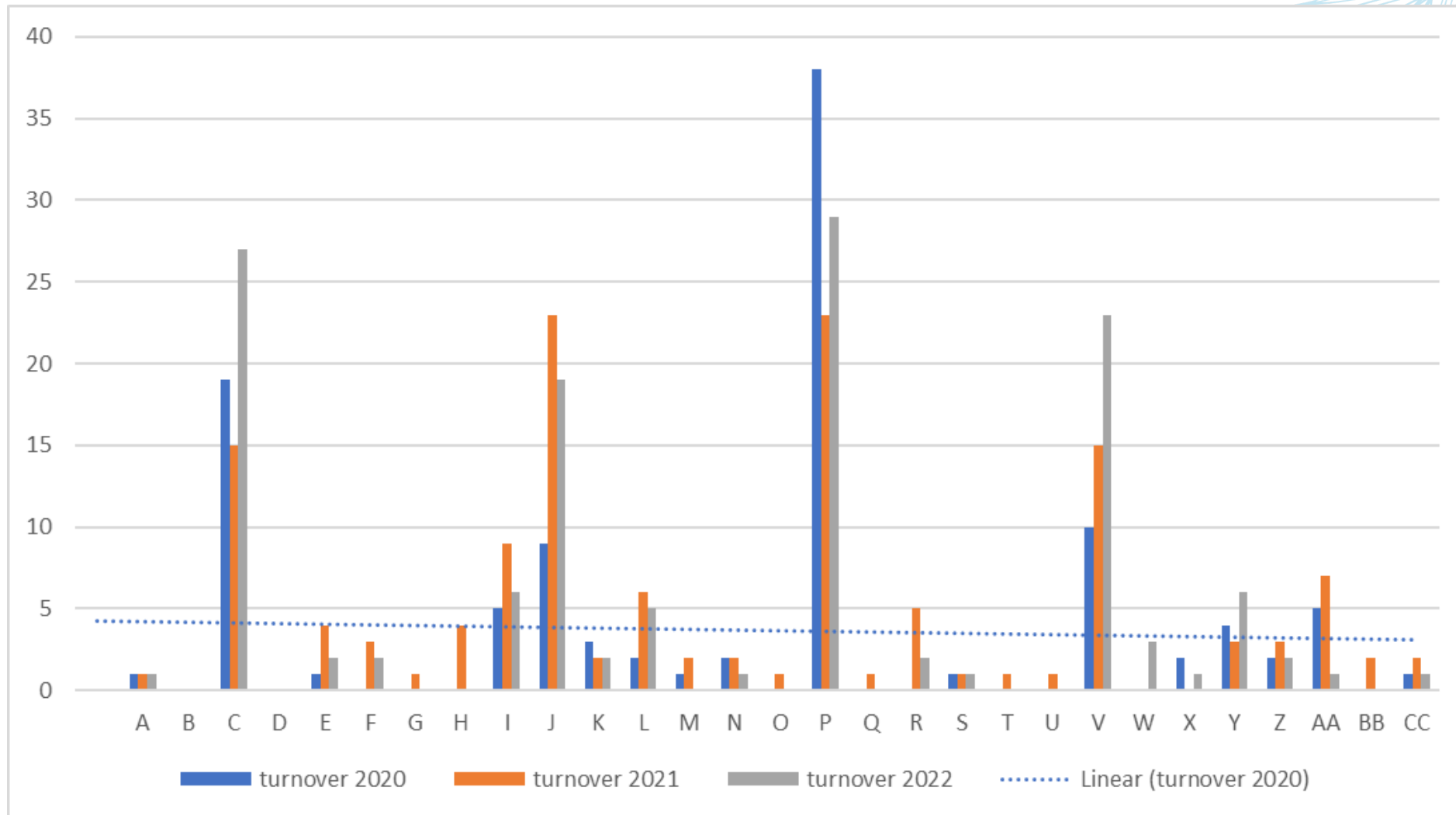
- Ability to monitor and assess services provided
- Participate in quality improvement and workflow optimization

Specialty Account Coordinator II

- Master Coordinator I competencies
- Train new co-workers
- Discuss advancement opportunities with your direct leader

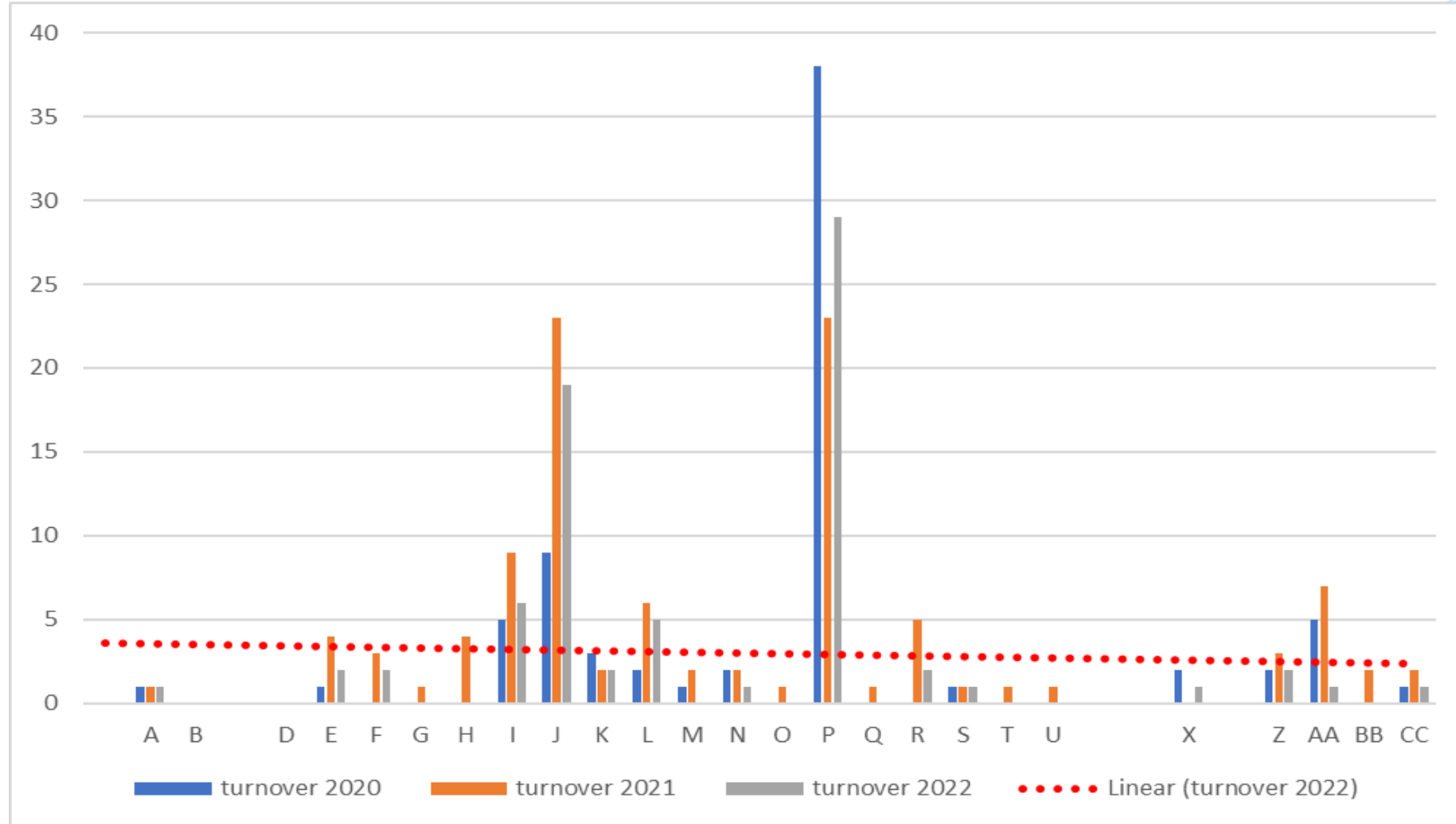
Source: Mercy Career Ladder 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Turnover (voluntary)

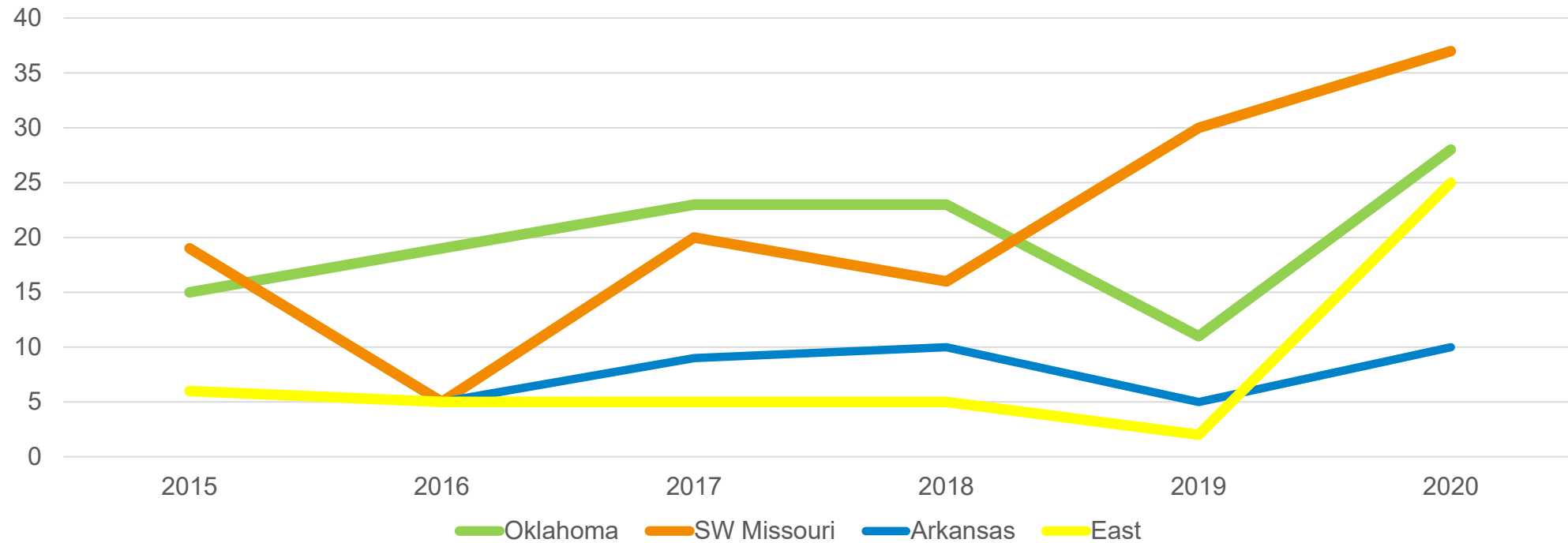


Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Turnover (voluntary)

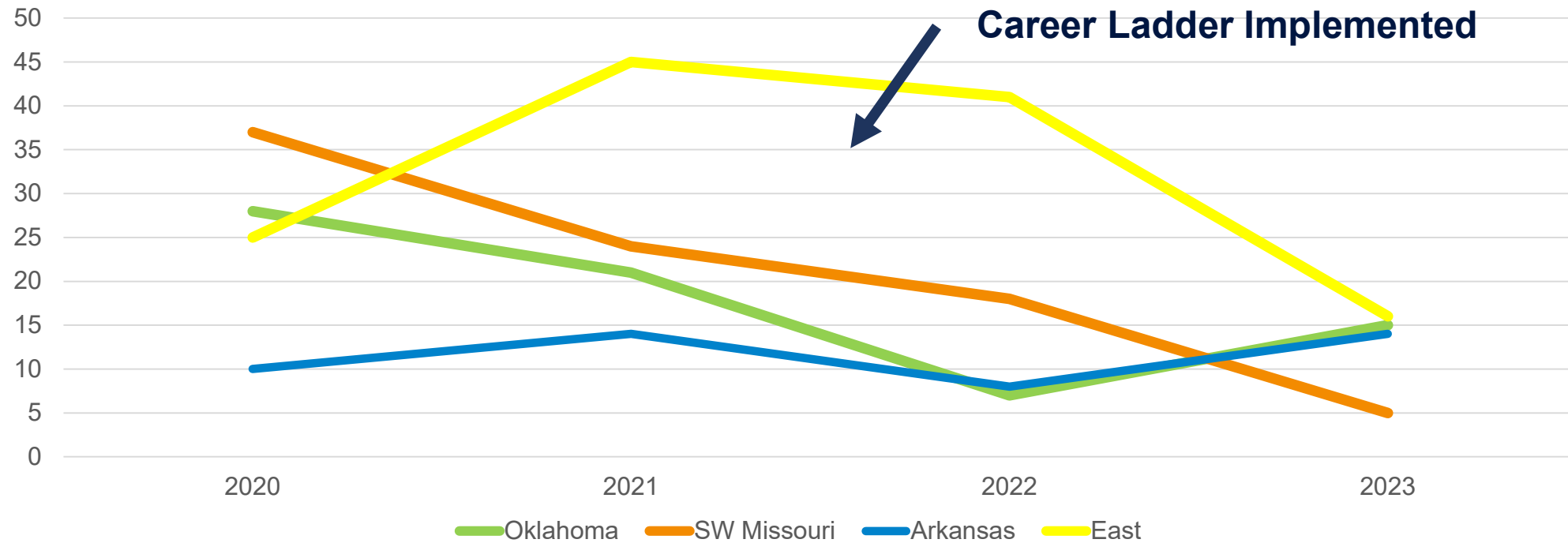


Pharmacy Technician Openings – Pre-ladder



Source: Mercy WorkDay – accessed May 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacy Technician Openings – Post-ladder



Source: Mercy WorkDay – accessed May 2024. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Keys to Success

- Deliberate approach
- Talent assessment
- 1:1 meaningful conversations
- Training
- Mentoring



Pharmacy Technician Promotions



826 Promotions since new career ladder

Plus career promotions into other areas

Opioid Stewardship Team

340B Team

Automation Team

Specialty Account Coordinator

Source of Pharmacy Technician transfers

Cook

Barista

Teacher

Linen Tech

Instrument Tech

Anesthesia Tech

Ophthalmic Assistant

Lab Support Tech

Childcare worker

Volunteer



Mercy Pharmacy

Pharmacist Workforce Trends



2019

- Pharmacist shortage
- Job ads recruiting pharmacists grew by 180%

2021

- 73% growth in pharmacy schools since 2000
- >48% increase in applicant acceptance rate

2022

- 12% decrease in first year Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) programs from 2021
- 21% decrease in enrollment from 2019

2024

- Looming market shortages
- Strategize:
 - Retain
 - Grow
 - Attract
 - Expand

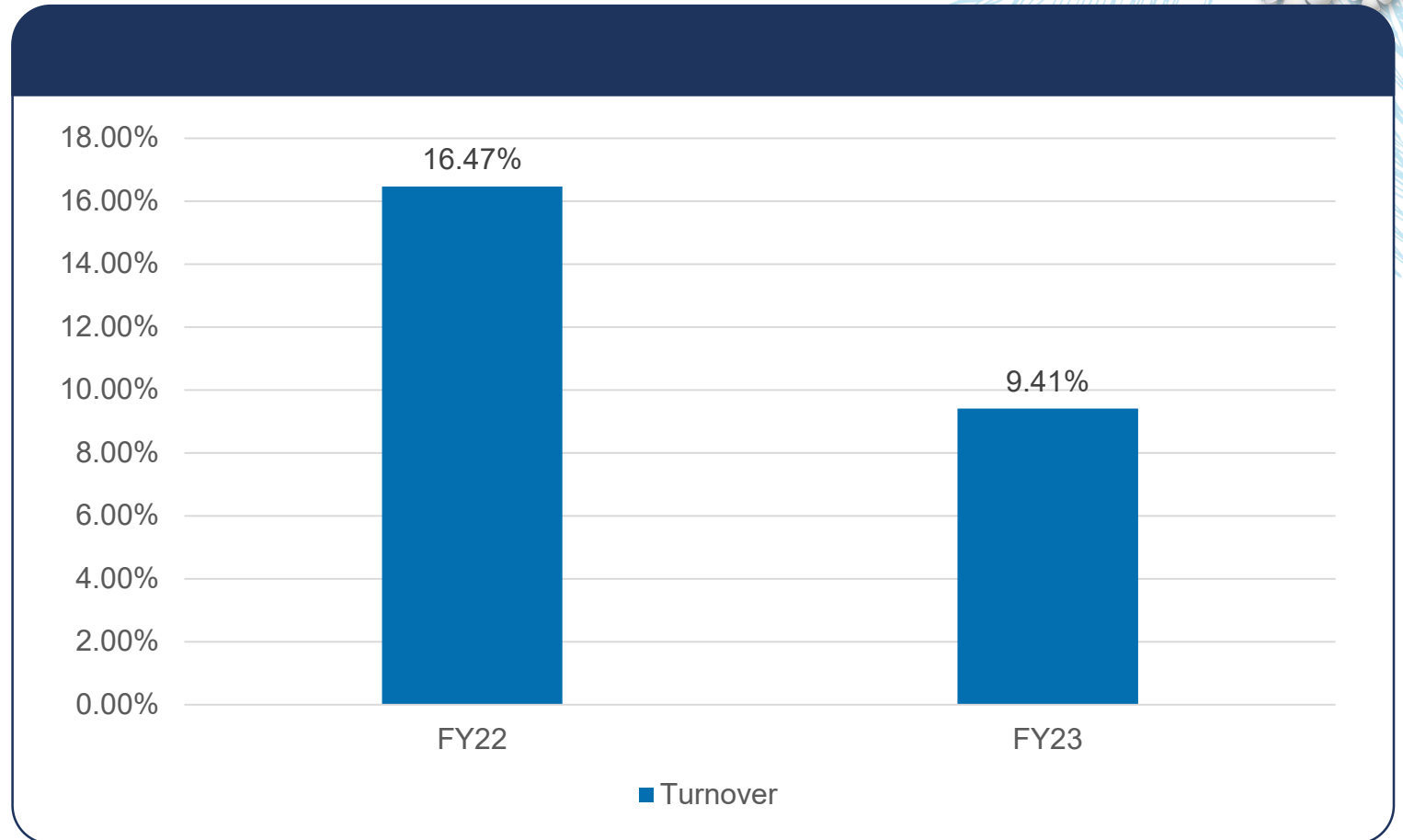
Source: Pharmacist Job Outlook: Supply Versus Demand. Health Care Logistics. 24 Sept 2021

Pharmacist Pre-ladder Data



COVID-19 Recovery

- Clear impact of post-COVID workforce trends
- Ladder implemented June 2023 (start of FY24)



Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist & Specialist Career Ladder



Source: ASHP = American Society of Health System Pharmacists

29 | **CE Credit Deadline: 09/30/24**

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Clinical Pharmacist Promotion Criteria



- 5 Required Activities**
Years experience, Mercy Values & Charism, Celebrated Others, Contribution to Systemwide Projects, Preceptorship
- 6 Professional Qualifications**
Advanced training or years' experience, advanced degrees, certifications, national recognitions
- 11 Contributions to Pharmacy Practice**
Develop a new service or protocol, in-services, committee involvement, project work (clinical, operational, financial, quality, safety)
- 14 Professional Engagement**
Publication, lectures, research, professional organization leadership, volunteerism, training & onboarding

Source: Key elements of Mercy Clinical Pharmacist Career Ladder. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Clinical Specialist Promotion Criteria



5 Required Activities

Years experience, Mercy Values & Charism, Celebrated Others, [publication and/or platform presentations](#), Preceptorship

4 Professional Qualifications

Advanced training or years' experience, advanced degrees, [2 or more certifications](#), national recognitions

10 Contributions to Pharmacy Practice

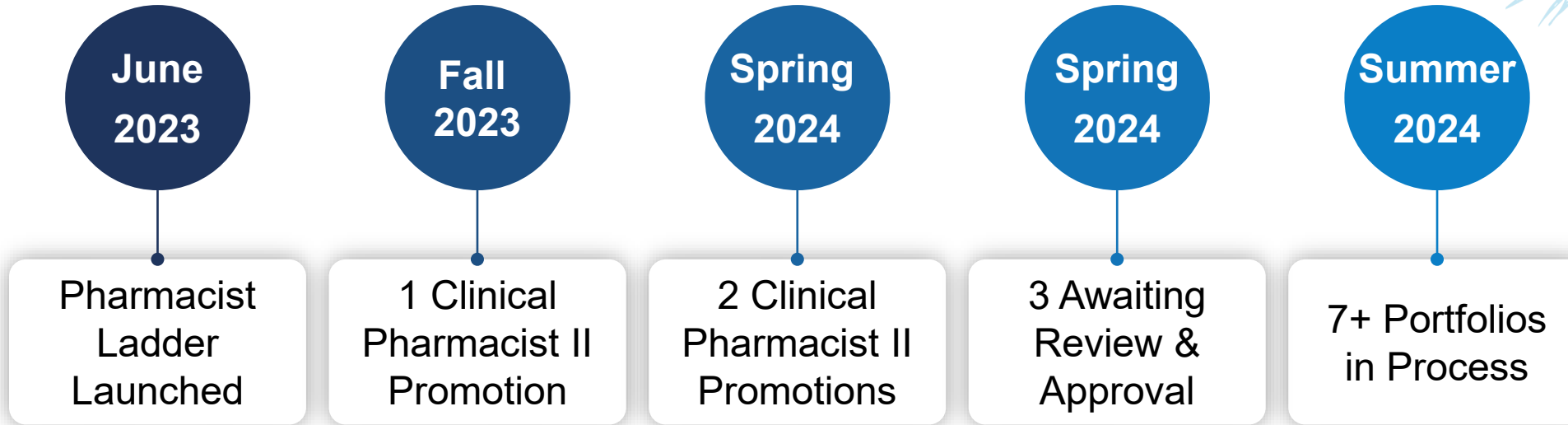
Develop a new service or protocol, in-services, [committee chair](#), [system-level project work](#) (clinical, operational, financial, quality, safety), [primary project lead](#)

10 Professional Engagement

Publication, lectures, research, professional organization leadership, volunteerism, training & onboarding

Source: Key elements of Mercy Clinical Pharmacist Career Ladder. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist Promotions



Prior to 2023

- No promotional data as only one job for pharmacist or clinical pharmacist existed at each site
- Part of the ladder work was to standardize all pharmacist job codes and descriptions to fit the ladder

Source: Mercy Human Resources. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist Post-ladder Data

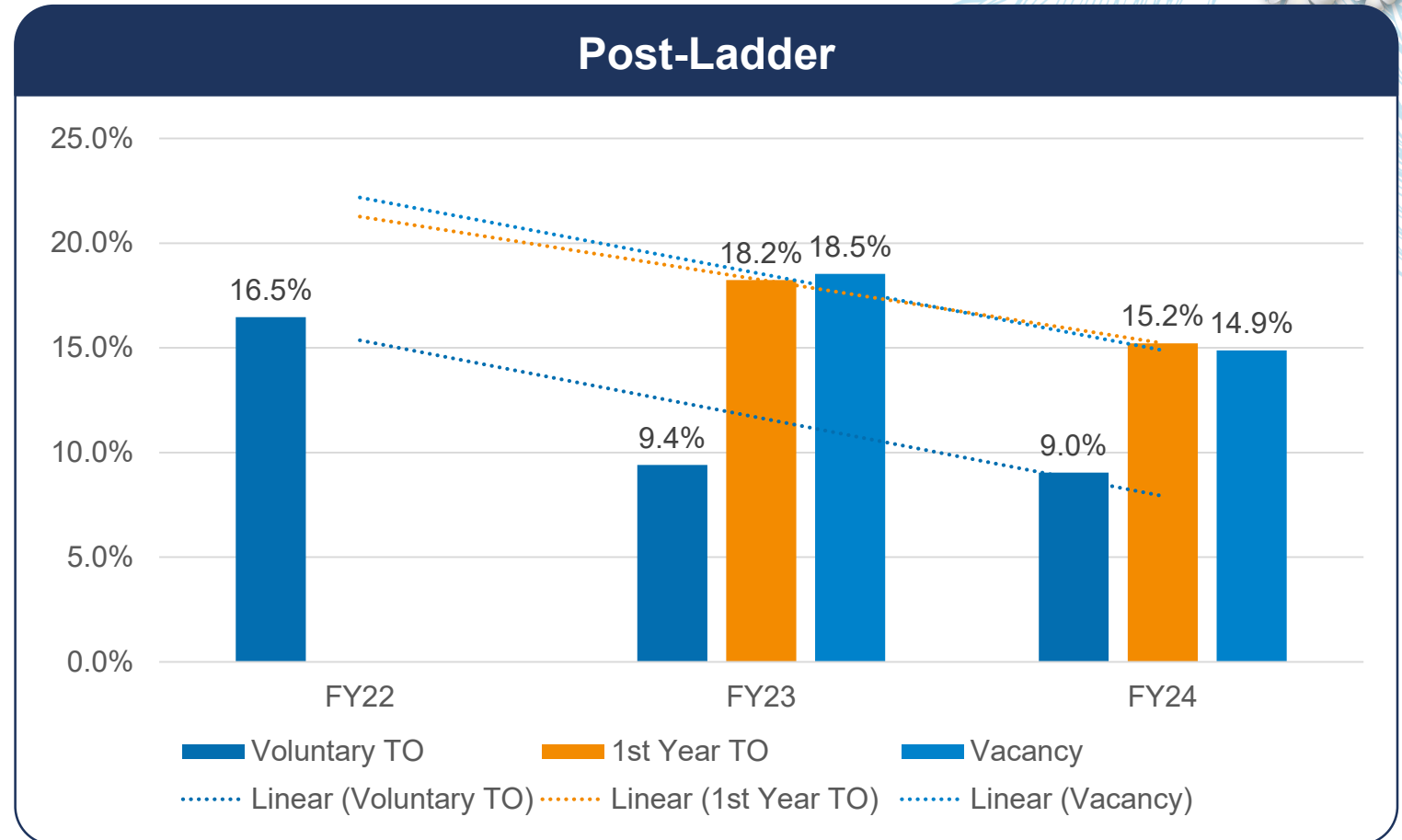


Trends

- Lower turnover
- Lower vacancy

Variables

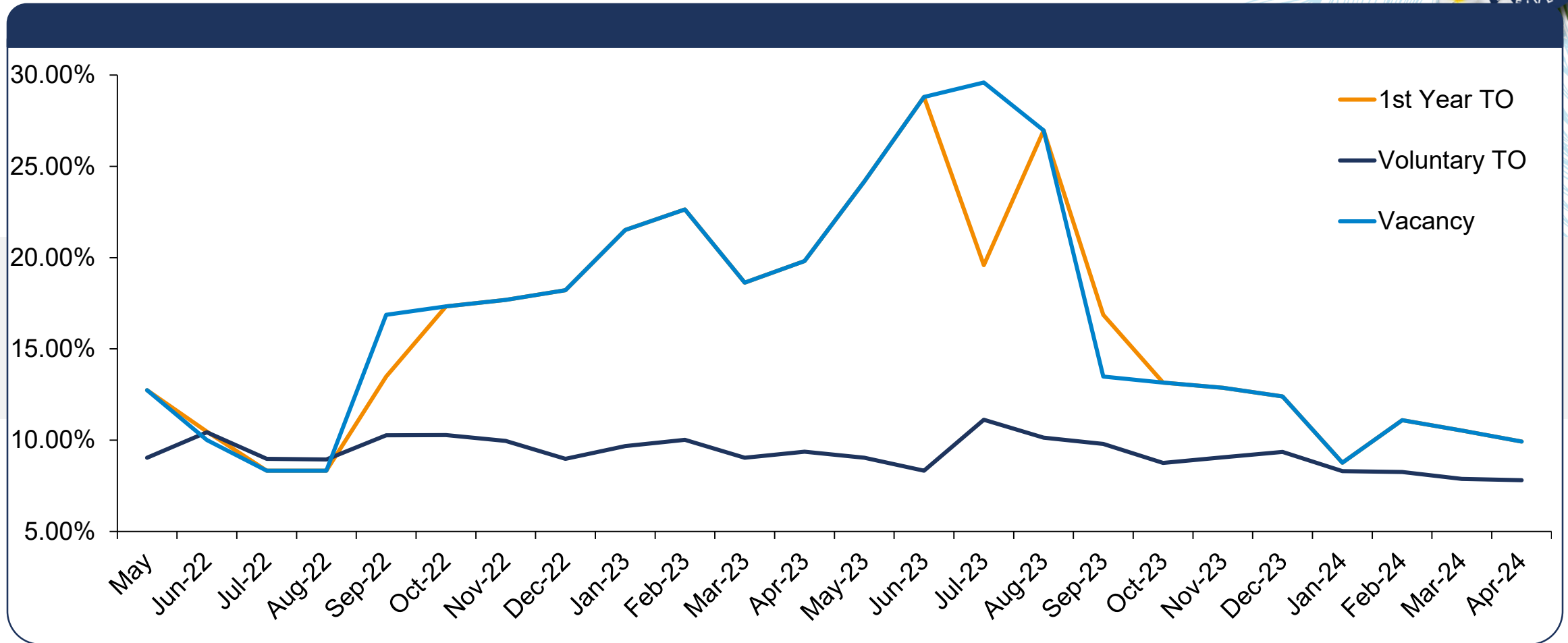
- Increased FTEs allotted in some communities
- Leadership restructures in large communities



Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

TO = turnover

Pharmacist Pre- & Post-ladder Data

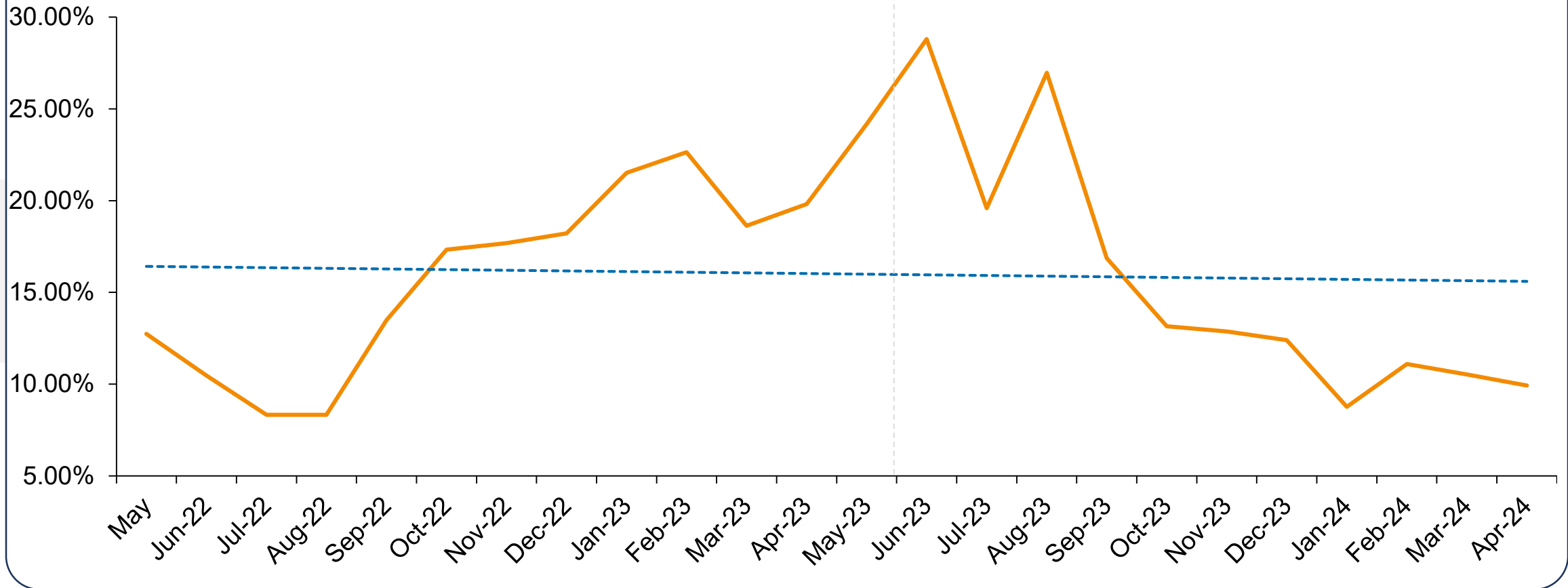


Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist Pre- & Post-Ladder Data

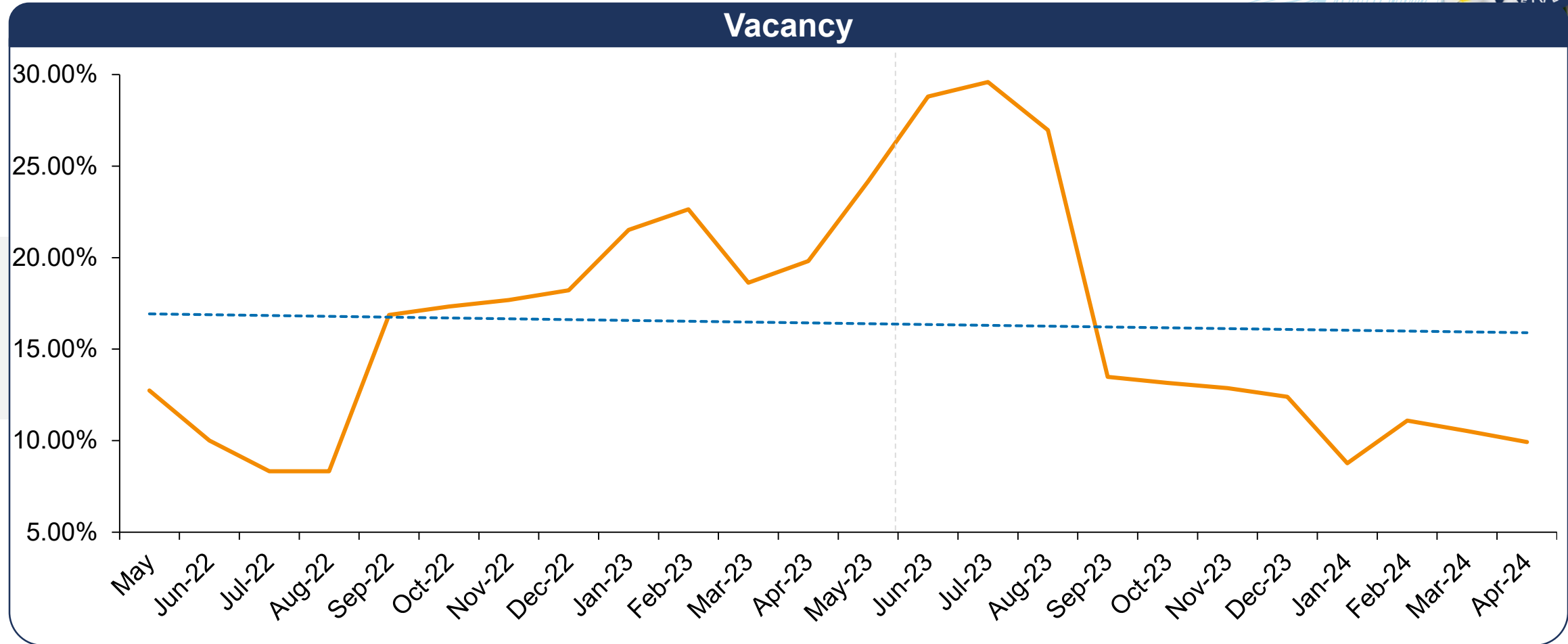


First Year Turnover



Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist Pre- & Post-Ladder Data

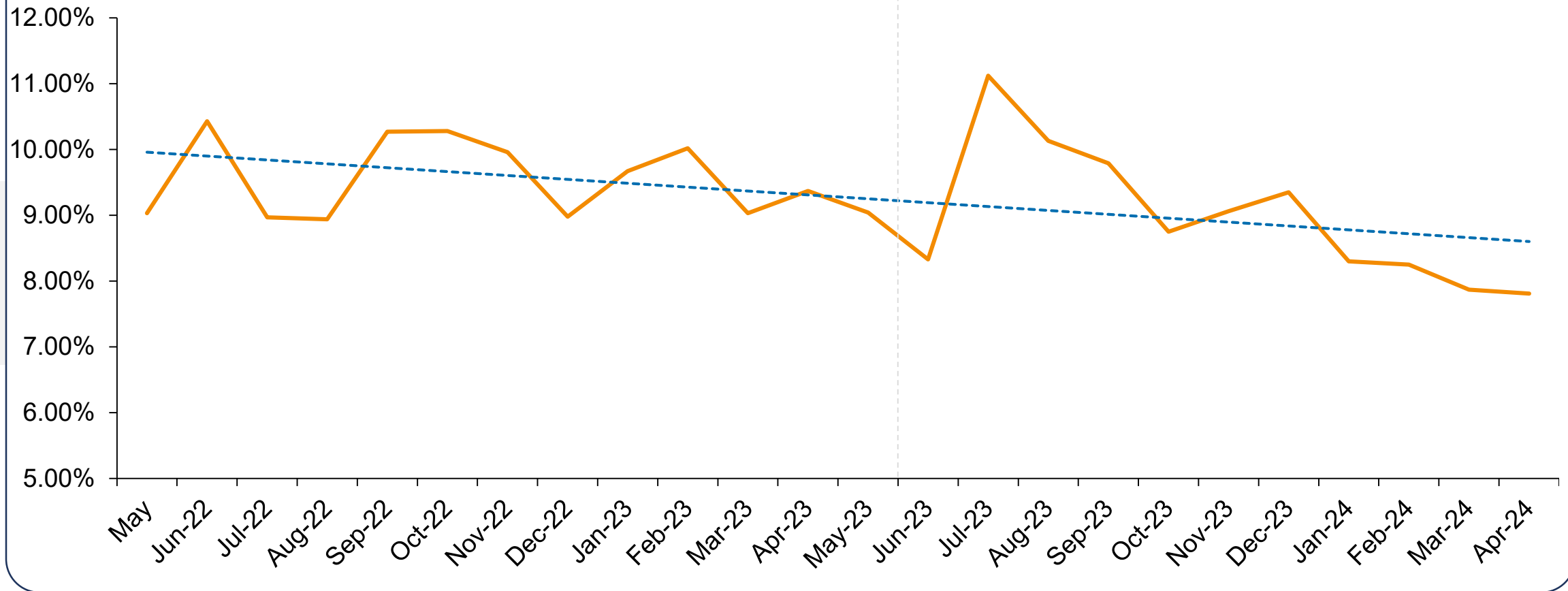


Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Pharmacist Pre- & Post-Ladder Data



Voluntary Turnover



Source: Mercy Human Resources Power BI Data. Not for reuse without permission of Mercy.

Case Study: Clinical Pharmacists



Culture of Teaching & Learning

ASHP Accredited Preceptors

- Foundation of 1:1s, mentoring, coaching & development through the residency programs prior to career ladder launch
- Already required to engage in professional advancement & personal development
- Clinical team leads
- Established peer-to-peer leaders & mentors for other pharmacists

Source: ASHP = American Society of Health System Pharmacists



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission of HealthTrust.

Case Study: Washington Interview & Onboardi



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission of HealthTrust.

Case Study: Leadership



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission of HealthTrust.

Future Implications: Technicians



- Pharmacy Technician shortage to continue
- Required Technician Certification
- New technology
 - Tech check tech
- Pharmacist Shortage
 - Role for Pharmacy Technicians
- Pharmacy Technicians to practice at top of their license & at the top of their qualifications

Case Study: Technician



Career Path

- Technician
- Certified Technician

- Compliance Coordinator (old job description)
- PRN + Scheduler

- Tech Specialist I
- Tech Specialist II
- Technician Lead

Education

- On the job training
- Technician certification

- Associates degree

- Selected courses in data, meeting minutes, public speaking
- Bachelors in progress



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission of HealthTrust.

Future Implications: Pharmacists



Strategizing License Capabilities

Practice to the top of their license & qualifications

- Technicians, more specialized tech roles
- Patient care quality improvement outcomes
- Pharmacist specialty area placement should match physician needs (growth & gaps)
- Leverage technology



Source: Getty Images. Used with permission of HealthTrust.

Expanded Applications



Expand use of National Certifications as ladder criteria



Technology & platform proficiency



More peer-to-peer governance & ownership of career ladder & proficiency assessment



Application outside of pharmacy

Building a Career Ladder: 6 Steps



Assessment Question #1



The key aspects of a strong engagement program include:

- A. Talent assessment
- B. Training programs
- C. Work conditions
- D. Mentoring
- E. All the above

Answer: Assessment Question #1



The key aspects of a strong engagement program include:

- A. Talent assessment
- B. Training programs
- C. Work conditions
- D. Mentoring
- E. All the above**

Assessment Question #2



Promotion criteria for a successful career ladder should include:

- A. Professional qualifications
- B. Contribution to professional practice
- C. Professional engagement
- D. Increase in pay only
- E. A, B, and C

Answer: Assessment Question #2



Promotion criteria for a successful career ladder should include:

- A. Professional qualifications
- B. Contribution to professional practice
- C. Professional engagement
- D. Increase in pay only
- E. A, B, and C**

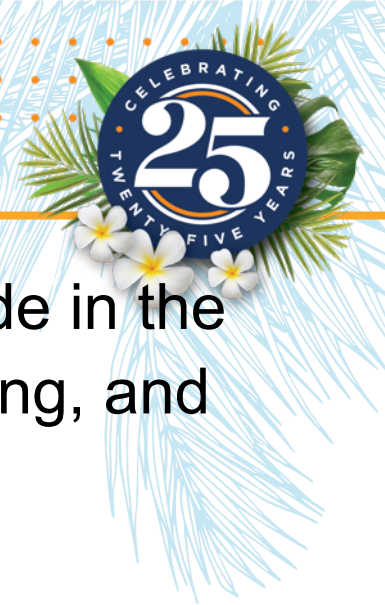
Assessment Question #3



Success with career ladder implementation will reflect leadership aptitude in the key elements of talent assessment, 1:1 meaningful conversations, training, and mentoring within a culture of learning:

- A. True
- B. False

Answer: Assessment Question #3



Success with career ladder implementation will reflect leadership aptitude in the key elements of talent assessment, 1:1 meaningful conversations, training, and mentoring within a culture of learning:

- A. True
- B. False

References



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Thank you...

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