Background and Statement of Purpose: Due to a low nurse retention rate and a perceived lack of support among new ICU nurses, a workgroup was formed to create a mentoring program to promote the growth and development of the new hires and to help build trusting relationships, thus reducing new associate turnover while improving communication and nurse satisfaction.

Setting: A twenty-bed medical-surgical intensive care unit in a small, not-for-profit community hospital.

Sample: All ICU nurses were surveyed pre-implementation and post-implementation. Participation in the mentoring program was strongly encouraged for all staff new to ICU, for a period of three to twelve months, based on individual needs, and utilized voluntary mentors from existing professional ICU nursing staff.

Method for Project: A process improvement project was implemented using the PDCA model to create and maintain the peer mentoring program.

Procedure: Mentors received training pre-implementation and were provided activity plans for the pairs to help foster psychosocial support, empowerment, and continuing education. A workgroup assisted pairs with support and monitoring. An anonymous survey was developed and distributed to all ICU staff members with voluntary participation prior to implementation and again one year post-implementation to determine effects of the mentoring program on ICU nurse satisfaction and perception of communication.

Results: Pre- and post-implementation retention rates showed an improvement in nurse retention. Feedback from program participants showed favorable response to program, perception of support, and increased communication amongst ICU nurses.

Conclusions: Formation of supportive relationships helps nurses new to ICU increase comfort in critical care setting through confidence-building and professional development, therefore increasing job satisfaction and new nurse retention. By fostering collaborative relationships, teamwork and communication may help overall nursing satisfaction on a nursing unit.

Implications for Practice: The adoption of a mentoring program can be beneficial to reduce turnover and improve nurse satisfaction.