

Tapestry 360 Health Healthcare Leadership Profiles

Women's History Month Edition

2023



Introduction

Tapestry 360 Health is proud to recognize our leadership team. This special report profiles six women in leadership, who share their career experiences, accomplishments, leadership styles, and offer helpful advice for future leaders and women interested in healthcare. Read their stories and be inspired by the women who serve in healthcare leadership.



NICOLE WILLIS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



What has your career and leadership journey been, and what drew you to work in healthcare?

As I reflect on my career and leadership journey, I always knew that I wanted to work in healthcare because I wanted to make a difference and have an impact on the lives of others. As a respiratory therapist, I've had the opportunity to take care of some sick patients, and when I could see those patients go home, there was no greater feeling than to know that I, along with others on the care team, made a positive impact on their lives.

Leadership was something that I saw from an early age. My father was an entrepreneur who owned his own leather goods store. My mother had a 30-year career as an executive leader with a Fortune 500 company at a time when women, never mind black women, holding similar positions was rare. So, leadership came naturally to me. As I advanced my career as a therapist, I began seeking leadership opportunities. I spent six years managing clinical and administrative operations at a large academic medical center in Chicago before joining Tapestry 360 Health as Director of Operations. After serving as Director of Operations and later Vice President of Operations, it was an extreme honor to be chosen as the permanent CEO by Tapestry 360 Health's board of directors.

Although I no longer provide direct patient care, in my role as CEO and through the amazing work that our teams do daily, I still feel like I have a small impact on the lives of the people that we serve.



How would you describe your leadership style, and how has it evolved over your career?

My leadership style can flex based on the situation at hand, but my natural style is a servant leader. I empower my team and aim for diversity in voice and thought. This style increases collaboration and engagement and fosters a mutual trust. I am supportive and know when it's important for me to get involved and when to let my team do what they do best.

My style has NOT changed much over the years and I think people that I have worked with would likely say the same.

What has been your experience leading the organization over the past two years?

Leading the organization over the past two years has been busy, but fun and every day I learn something new!

Over the last two years, we have grown exponentially as an organization, undergone a name and brand change, and unveiled a new strategic plan!

We learned to adjust to a new normal amongst tremendous change. Yet, we are still grounded in our mission, and continue to provide high quality care, and are actively working on creating improved and expanded access to care for our patients.



What is Tapestry 360 Health's role in serving communities across the north side of Chicago?

Tapestry 360 Health is committed to providing necessary care to anyone who needs it regardless of their ability to pay and especially the medically underserved and most vulnerable populations in the communities that we serve. This includes providing primary care, behavioral, and oral health services for all ages.

What advice do you have for women and others in healthcare who aspire to be leaders in the sector?

Here are a few pearls that have served me well:

- Find a mentor to support your journey to the top
- Leadership is not for the faint at heart - you must be resilient which to me means having the capacity to meet adversity and setbacks head on, learning from them, bouncing back and being ready for the next challenge (because it will come!)
- Take care of YOU! Make sure to build self-care into your daily life – you can only be as good to others as you are to yourself!

AMANDA SOLON
SENIOR DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT



What has your career and leadership journey been, and what drew you to work in healthcare?

My professional career has always been in the non-profit sector. I began as a union organizer, then a community organizer, and then served as Executive Director of an advocacy organization for older adults for 15 years. Healthcare, and the struggle for affordability and equity, has been a thorough line in my work. In the union job, I fought for better wages and benefits for home health workers, so I learned all about the challenges faced by those doing such vital work but not being paid a living wage.

At my many years at Metro Seniors in Action, I learned about how programs like Medicare and Social Security provide older adults, particularly those with low-incomes, the safety net needed to live out life with dignity. In this job, circa 1992, I first learned about single payer health care and how fractured and bloated our health care system is in comparison to other countries. Also at this time, I joined a speakers training on single payer, and first heard healthcare described as a human right. I deeply believe in this statement and that is one reason the mission of Tapestry 360 resonates with me so fully.



How would you describe your leadership style? How has your background in public service and healthcare helped define that?

I think my leadership style is inclusive. I try to meet people where they are and figure out how best to support them to have success. My background in public service certainly taught me that not everyone has had the same experiences and to be open to different approaches and styles. I don't expect my staff to think just like me or to work just like me. I have found if you lead with honesty and transparency, it will go a long way in building strong work relationships and yield good results.

As a woman in leadership, why do you think it is important for women to be leaders and to lift each other up?

Women historically had to fight for a seat at every table and for leadership roles in every sector. Young women seeing other women in leadership roles is the first step, but those in leadership roles should also make every effort to support and nurture future women leaders. It is important that women's experiences and voices are heard at every level and women offering support to other women is the best way to accomplish this.

How can healthcare leaders continue to be inclusive in their C-suites and leadership below them?

Four words I always find helpful: what do you think? It shows staff their opinion is valued and gives space for them to contribute. Also, always be on the lookout for mentorship opportunities, whether it is inviting them to an event, giving them needed autonomy on a project, or making a meaningful introduction to a colleague.



Do you have any advice you'd like to share for women who aspire to be healthcare leaders?

Great leaders can still be effective while being empathetic and kind. These are not weaknesses, but should be seen as strengths. Never underestimate the power of good communication and constructive feedback.

AESHA PATEL, DNP-FNP CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION



What has your career and leadership journey been, and what drew you to work in healthcare?

I started out my college career enrolled in a direct pharmacy program at Drake University where I quickly discovered my disdain for organic chemistry and desire for more patient interaction. I then switched gears and enrolled in nursing school – this was my “aha moment.” After getting a BSN, I worked as an RN on a med/surg/trauma floor for two years. During this time, I found myself developing deep connections with patients while caring for them and oftentimes worried about who would take care of them once they were back home– this is what led me to primary care. After gaining some experience, I applied to Director of Nursing Practice programs and started my journey as an NP student at Rush, which is where I was connected to Heartland Health Centers. During my first clinical rotation with Mary Dudek, I remember feeling so grateful (and inspired) to be in a position where you literally impact the lives of so many people on a daily basis – I was blown away in awe watching her care for her patients the way that she does.

What drew me to healthcare? – My father. From day one, his motto has been “always help others” and he consistently demonstrated what it means to have empathy for others. He has always taught me how important it was to use my privilege and voice to advocate for others and I truly believe that is what healthcare is all about.



What can health centers and health systems do now to improve patient safety and quality and expand it in the post-COVID world?

I think health centers and systems need to maintain a growth mindset and continue thinking outside the box about new ways to improve patient safety and quality. Clearly there's an evident need to re-strategize how we deliver healthcare given the growing complexity of our patient population. It's imperative that leaders are continuously advocating for change and process improvement – creating low-risk spaces for employees to trial their ideas can help expand the boundaries in which we currently practice. I think it's also important that we reset expectations and revisit established practices. Although COVID-19 brought forth a variety of new challenges, it also created new opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and innovation.



How can healthcare leaders remain inclusive in their C-suites and the leadership below them?

I think authentic and servant leadership is the way to go. Maintaining a bottom-up approach is crucial in ensuring that frontline employees have a sense of power and belonging, and more importantly, a voice. Making sure people feel valued and actively seeking ideas and unique contributions of your team can stimulate a culture of learning – where everyone brings their best version of themselves to the table. If you lead by demonstrating passion for your purpose, practice your values consistently, and lead with both your heart as well as your head, it truly can be transformative for an organization.

As a woman in leadership, why do you think it is important for women to be leaders and to lift each other up?

In my opinion, female leaders are a force that can't be reckoned with. Women are natural born leaders, it's part of our genetic structure. We take responsibility for nurturing people so that they feel included and valued. Having more women in leadership helps organizations form deeper connections, motivate and inspire other women, boost employee engagement, and provide unique cultural differences to the table which ultimately drive effective solutions. I have been fortunate enough to work alongside so many women leaders here at Tapestry and find sincere mentorship that has helped shape the woman I am today.

The late RBG said it best, "women belong in all places where decisions are made."



Do you have any advice you'd like to share for women who aspire to be healthcare leaders?

- “Always help others.” Showing other women love and compassion is one of the greatest gifts you can give and it costs absolutely nothing.
- Consistently and authentically advocate for others through servant leadership– this sparks meaningful progress, helps people feel purposeful, and increases motivation.
- Celebrate each other's gifts – if someone does something good or great, recognize them for their talent and contribution- set them up for success.
- If you are in a position where you can help another succeed, do it.
- Find a good trustworthy mentor and then pay it forward by becoming a good trustworthy mentor to others. Some of the greatest efforts and victories across the globe have come from community and connection.
- Reach out whenever you can, offer a helping hand, and always lift each other up. When women link up, there's no stopping us <3

ALLISON HALVORSEN DIRECTOR POPULATION HEALTH



What has your career and leadership journey been and what drew you to work in healthcare?

I started off working in an administrative role in affordable housing after college, but returned to school for nursing when I decided that I wanted something more hands-on. I did my time working overnight in a hospital setting, but after about a year I was able to find a clinic nurse job in a federally qualified health center that served primarily patients experiencing homelessness. I really loved this work, and developed an affinity for the important work FQHCs do to provide access to health care. I never intended pursue a leadership position if I'm being honest, but my interest in continuing to dig deeper into the ways we can impact people's health and health care access brought me here!

What can health centers and health systems do to improve patient safety and quality and expand it in the post-COVID world?

Whew, so many things. I think that the broader health system and the country at large is more aware of health inequities and all of the factors that impact health than we were pre-COVID, but that was not new or surprising for FQHCs. Hopefully we can build on that momentum at the broader health system level, and appropriately fund programs that address people's environments outside of the healthcare setting.



What pain points are you looking to address and solve for Tapestry 360 Health's underserved communities?

The U.S. healthcare system is so complex to navigate, even for those of us who work within it. We have a team of care coordinators and care managers who can help patients better navigate the health system, as well as help identify their own goals and priorities around their health. We are also working with community organizations to help ensure that we are providing care in ways that serve their client population well, and I think that learning more about (and being able to adapt to) the communities we serve will help impact health outcomes.

What has been your overall experience learning and working in healthcare as a woman?

I actually feel really lucky to be surrounded by women leaders in healthcare. I think every boss I've had working in healthcare has been a woman, and I have learned so much from their varied styles of leadership, which I'm so thankful for.

What advice do you have for women and others in healthcare who aspire to be leaders in the sector?

I don't feel that well-equipped to give advice, but I try to practice humility in leadership. When I started here at Tapestry 360 Health, Jeff Panzer introduced me to the concept of an inverted pyramid, in which we are not overseeing our staff, but supporting them in their work, and that is what I try to do.

**EMILY SHAFFER, DRPH
DIRECTOR, COVID OPERATIONS**



What has your career and leadership journey been and what drew you to work in healthcare?

My career journey has been fairly linear in that once I landed in the public health sector, I was here to stay. I started in pharmacy as a patient account rep and later moved into regulations with a national association before jumping into community health where I had expanding roles in hospitals, clinics, hospice and CDPH- finally landing at Heartland Health. As a consumer of the healthcare system, for better or worse, I felt strongly about the need to increase access and improve health outcomes – so, aligning this passion with action by pursuing roles in healthcare that allowed me to contribute towards that goal made perfect sense to me.

What can health centers and health systems do now to improve patient safety and quality and expand it in the post-COVID world?

COVID overwhelmed the healthcare system and shocked everyone into a new reality. For patients, as well as staff, and the community at large - safety is paramount as we forge ahead in this post-pandemic world with the hard lessons learned. We must remember the dangers of misinformation, continue to educate, and communicate openly and honestly with patients. Maintain the fundamentals of hand washing and masking as our first line of defense because COVID was not the first and will not be the last virus we contend with.



How would you describe your leadership style? How has your background in public service and healthcare helped define that?

I don't necessarily have a leadership "style", but I adapt to the needs of my staff and the organization as a whole. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and leaders don't simply oversee from an elevated perch – we act as conduits and provide the space for shaping positive outcomes through observing, listening, and fostering teamwork and collaboration. Leaders don't start as leaders; they generally work their way up through various roles that inform and educate – and these lessons help define their purpose. It is a privilege to work in healthcare and contribute to improving the health and well-being of our communities.

How can healthcare leaders continue to be inclusive in their C-suites and leadership below them?

Get to know people. Be transparent. Seek continuous feedback, from all voices. Ensure everyone is engaged as this creates buy-in and a positive environment for collaboration. In any organization, when you feel valued, you add value.

Do you have any advice you'd like to share for women who aspire to be leaders in healthcare?

Be authentic. Think globally. We need leaders who understand that the healthcare landscape is constantly evolving, and you must be prepared to roll with the changes. Confidence is contagious, be an example.

**ANNA HERETH, PA-C
CLINICAL DIRECTOR, PSYCHIATRY
PSYCHIATRIC PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT**



What has your career and leadership journey been and what drew you to work in healthcare?

I've wanted to work in healthcare for as long as I can remember. My mom was a practice manager at a dermatologist's office and I spent a lot of time palling around with the providers, nurses and staff (I thought the physician assistant was especially cool and wanted to grow up to be her). I have had the pleasure of being at Tapestry 360 Health since I graduated physician assistant school! I started as a psychiatric physician assistant and have really enjoyed my administrative role as clinical director of psychiatry since 2021. We are lucky to have an amazing psychiatry and behavioral health team!

How can healthcare leaders remain inclusive in their C-suites and the leadership below them?

I think it's important to find brief opportunities to connect and to always practice empathy and kindness in communication with colleagues, regardless of their role or status.



What are your priorities, and what are you focusing on accomplishing before the end of the year?

My main priority is to ensure folks have access to psychiatric care and I will continue working on initiatives to increase access to care and support for the population we serve as well as our psychiatry team within Tapestry 360 Health.

What challenges are you looking forward to addressing as we move into the new year?

The last 3 years have been especially challenging for anyone in care work (teachers, healthcare workers, childcare providers, etc.). My priority this year is to continue creating process improvements to provide high quality care to the clients we serve while focusing on supporting our own mental and physical well-being.

Do you have any advice you'd like to share for women who aspire to be healthcare leaders?

Remember that your entire existence does not have to revolve around your career for you to excel. That doesn't mean you are less committed. In fact, I think having a vibrant and joyful life outside of your career makes you more effective at work.



We are a Tapestry of patients, staff, and community partners inclusive of various ethnicities, cultures, social-economic backgrounds, and orientations interwoven together to form a beautiful healthcare family.

Tap360health.org