



Residency Guide: Transitioning from a Pharmacy Administration and Leadership (PAL) Resident to Leader

*Developed by the ASHP Pharmacy Administration and
Leadership Resident's Collaborative
Resident Resources Workgroup*

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Objectives

1. **Identify and Prioritize Opportunities:** Help residents learn to prioritize tasks and opportunities that align with their career goals and residency program requirements.
2. **Enhance Strategic Thinking:** Encourage residents to utilize their strategic thinking skills and available resources to lead effectively.
3. **Understand Managerial Responsibilities:** Provide various resources to facilitate the transition from resident to pharmacy manager.
4. **Prepare for Leadership Roles:** Provide valuable tips and guidance for applying to managerial positions.

Preparation as a Resident

Successfully transitioning into a pharmacy leadership role isn't just about experience, it's about preparation, strategy, and execution. As you prepare to step into this next phase of your career, consider how intentional preparation can position you as strong, capable leader from day one.

More often than not, pharmacy administration and leaders (PAL) residents are ambitious, skilled, and ready to lead. But here's the challenge—they're beginning the transition out of residency, yet not quite experienced leaders. They need more than just clinical expertise; they need strategy, preparation, and professional presence to transition successfully. So, how do you bridge the gap?

The answer is simple: **Strategic preparation!** But not just any preparation - intentional, structured, and forward-thinking planning that positions you as a leader before you even step into the role. Here are a few key points:

Craft leadership identities. CVs and cover letter should tell a compelling story - quantify the impact, highlight leadership experiences, and align with the role.

Master the interview process. Leadership interviews focus on problem-solving, decision-making, and vision. Use structured responses, research institutional priorities, and demonstrate how a PAL graduate can drive change.

Professional communication matters. Maintain email etiquette, manage meetings effectively, and present professionally in virtual settings.

Engage beyond the institution. Join committees, network with leaders, and get involved in professional organizations. Strategic connections accelerate growth.

Professional Pharmacy Practice Subscriptions & Journals

Managers and leaders rely on subscriptions, publications, and continuing education (CE) resources to stay informed on industry trends, regulations, leadership strategies, and clinical advancements.

- **Sample Subscriptions**

- [American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy](#) – Peer-reviewed scientific papers on contemporary drug therapy and pharmacy practice innovations in hospitals and health systems
- [Pharmacy Times – Health-System Edition](#) – Provides insights into clinical practice, leadership, and operational efficiency for health-system pharmacists
- [Drug Topics](#) – Covers pharmacy management, policy, and regulatory updates relevant to pharmacy executives
- [Pharmacy Practice News](#) – Focuses on hospital and health-system pharmacy leadership, financial trends, and operational strategies

- [Managed Healthcare Executive](#) – Provides insights on formulary management, PBMs, and healthcare leadership strategies
- **Sample Continuing Education (CE) & Executive Leadership Programs**
 - [ASHP Pharmacy Leadership Academy \(PLA\)](#) – A high-level leadership development program for aspiring and current pharmacy executives
 - [ASHP Managers' Bootcamp](#) – Workshop designed for managers, directors, and clinical leaders who are interested in developing the skills necessary to advance new services and programs within their organizations
 - [Institute for Safe Medication Practices \(ISMP\) CE Programs](#) – Focuses on medication safety and risk management strategies
 - [Becker's Hospital Review Webinars & Conferences](#) – Covers hospital leadership, pharmacy management, and industry regulations
 - [ASHP eLearning](#) – Catalog of CE and educational opportunities, including free, on-demand webinars and the ASHP Pharmacy Leadership Certificates
- **Sample Pharmacy Business & Operations Resources**
 - [ASHP Pharmacy Revenue Cycle Management Certificate](#) - Designed to increase knowledge and skill in calculating reimbursement, documentation and billing, and revenue compliance within health systems
 - [Pharmacy Benefit Management Institute \(PBMI\)](#) – Insights on formulary management, pharmacy benefits, and cost containment
 - [Healthcare Financial Management Association \(HFMA\)](#) – Financial and operational strategies for healthcare executives

Meetings and Conferences

- **National**
 - [ASHP Conference for Pharmacy Leaders](#)
 - Sessions on innovative clinical initiatives, operational management, strategic planning, and workforce development
 - Networking events with experienced leaders and former PAL residents
 - Leadership courses and workshops: Managers' Boot Camp and 340B University
 - [ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting & Exhibition](#)
 - Focuses on professional development, updating pharmacy practice skills, and staying current with the latest products and innovations in pharmacy
 - Residency showcases and professional networking opportunities with national pharmacy leaders

- **Regional and Local Engagement:**
 - Many states have an ASHP affiliate or “state” society of health-system pharmacists in which they hold annual or bi-annual meetings and offer leadership programming
 - Attending state conferences and meetings allows new leaders to connect with mentors and peers within their region
 - Check out the [ASHP State Affiliate Directory](#) to find your local or state ASHP affiliate organization
 - [ASHP Councils and Committees](#)
 - Explore opportunities to participate in councils, committees, and advisory bodies in Pharmacy Management, Pharmacy Practice, Public Policy, and Therapeutics
 - Volunteering for workgroups to increase visibility among institutional leaders and provide hands-on experience in decision-making, process improvement, and policy development
 - [ASHP Section and Forum Advisory Groups](#)
 - ASHP’s membership sections and forums host over 50 advisory groups and committees, each offering annual volunteer opportunities

Networking Resources

- [Pharmacy Administration and Leadership Resident’s Collaborative \(PALRC\)](#)
 - Participate in PALRC activities to guide the PAL resident community and network with other leaders
 - Hosts multiple annual networking events for the PAL community
- [ASHP Pharmacy Practice Sections and Forums](#)
 - Membership communities within ASHP where colleagues who share similar practice interests can network and share ideas and resources
- [ASHP New Practitioners Forum](#)
 - Home for recent pharmacist graduates transitioning into residency, fellowship, and professional practice
 - The forum addresses the unique needs of new practitioners in an encouraging and motivational atmosphere
- [ASHP Connect](#)
 - Forum for members to ask questions, share experiences, post resources, and more
- [LinkedIn](#)
 - Employment-focused social media platform
 - Comprehensive career development platform, offering job listings, professional content, and industry-specific networking tools

Applying for Pharmacy Managerial/Leadership Roles

Transitioning into a pharmacy leadership role requires a combination of clinical expertise, operational understanding, and strategic leadership. Whether applying for a supervisor, manager, or director position, candidates must demonstrate their ability to guide teams, manage resources, and drive institutional priorities. A well-prepared application and interview strategy can set you apart in a competitive job market.

Tips & Tricks for Creating a Strong Application

- Articulate Your Leadership Vision
Employers seek leaders who can inspire teams and improve processes. Clearly define your leadership philosophy and provide examples of how you have influenced pharmacy practice
- Align Your Application with the Role
Customize your CV and cover letter to emphasize key skills relevant to the position, such as budget management, regulatory compliance, personnel development, and quality improvement
- Quantify Your Impact
Use measurable outcomes to demonstrate your effectiveness as a leader. Examples include:
 - Reduced medication errors by **X%** through process optimization
 - Led a team that increased pharmacy efficiency, cutting turnaround time by **X minutes**
 - Developed an intervention that saved **\$X** annually in medication costs
- Demonstrate Readiness Through Experiences
Even if you haven't held a formal leadership title, highlight experiences where you:
 - Managed projects or workgroups
 - Spearheaded process changes or policy updates
 - Served as a mentor, preceptor, or committee chair
- Leverage Mentor and Peer Feedback
Seek input from experienced pharmacy leaders on your application materials and conduct mock interviews to refine your responses
- For additional application advice check out these resources:
 - [CV Advice for PAL Residents: Post-Residency](#)
 - [Advice for New Leaders Completing Job Applications](#) (podcast)

Preparing for the Interview Process

- Understand Institutional Priorities
Research the organization's mission, strategic goals, and operational challenges. Be prepared to

discuss how your leadership can address key areas such as workflow efficiency, financial stewardship, or staff engagement

- Showcase Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

Use structured responses (e.g., **STAR method – Situation, Task, Action, Result**) to describe how you have navigated challenges, led initiatives, or improved patient care

- Be Ready for Behavioral and Case-Based Questions

Pharmacy leadership interviews often include scenarios that assess your ability to:

- Manage conflict among staff
- Prioritize competing operational and clinical demands
- Justify a budget request or new service implementation
- Respond to a regulatory or safety compliance issue

- Engage Thoughtfully with Your Interviewers

Treat the interview as a two-way conversation. Ask insightful questions about leadership expectations, departmental challenges, and opportunities for growth

- Check out the podcast: [Interview Advice for New Leaders](#)

Before accepting a leadership position, consider:

- Alignment with Career Goals - Does the role support your professional aspirations and leadership development?
- Organizational Culture and Leadership Support - Is the department structured to provide mentorship and professional growth?
- Expectations and Workload Balance - Are leadership expectations realistic, and do you have the resources to be successful in the role?
- Opportunities for Impact - Does this position allow you to lead meaningful change in pharmacy practice, patient care, or operational efficiency?

By thoughtfully preparing your application, interview strategy, and career goals, you can position yourself as a strong candidate for pharmacy leadership roles, ensuring a successful and fulfilling transition into management.

You've Secured the Job ... Now What?

Congratulations! You have secured the leadership position. This exciting milestone reflects hard work, expertise, and dedication. Leadership isn't just about reaching the top and leading teams but doing so while continuously evolving, developing, and remaining authentic and genuine to who you are. Think of yourself as an asset to the organization. Continue to develop your skill set with humility, curiosity, and authenticity.

(Pre Day 1) Reflect on your Why

- Understand your motivation for leadership and pharmacy
- Reflect on your internal and external motivators
- Reflect and connect with your support system (personal and professional)
- Reflect on your journey, sacrifices, and hard work you have put in up to this point

First 30 - 60 Days: Observe, Listen, Learn

- Meet with team members
 - Schedule one-on-one meetings with technicians, peer managers, pharmacists
 - Focus on understanding workflows, pain points, successes, and historic context
 - Structure meetings with open-ended questions
- Schedule check ins with your director or supervisor
 - Align expectations and clarify your role within the organization and department
 - Demonstrate your strategic thinking and long-term planning abilities
- Build your knowledge base
 - Understand staffing models, compliance regulations, scheduling systems, and organization structure
- Establish your presence without being overpowering
 - Offer help, ask questions, but avoid immediately trying to "fix"
 - Identify areas where your skills can be useful
- Develop a consistent communication style
 - Use "We" language- Position yourself as part of the team, not above it
 - Work to be approachable and open to suggestions
 - Provide positive feedback early - reinforce strengths you observe
- Check out the podcast: [The First 90 Days](#)

Evolving Your Leadership Journey

- Transition from Doer to Enabler
 - Begin to shift completing tasks to empowering others to succeed
 - Model accountability and empathy
 - Stay authentic - adapt what resonates with your values
- Schedule time for reflection
 - Request feedback from team members regularly

- Continue to develop your leadership strengths
 - Courses, books, hospital leadership programs, ASHP webinars, etc.
- Stay up to date with the latest advancements in pharmacy practice and healthcare technology
- Demonstrate your commitment to continuous learning and improvement

Continue to be involved and Add Value

- Find ways to contribute to process improvements
- Support staff development
- Stay curious - ask thought provoking questions without implying criticism

Advice from PAL Graduates

“Curiosity is key. Ask plenty of questions. From this point on, you're responsible for your own continuous professional development. Additionally, use this time to learn your new team and your operation as best as possible.”

- **Kofi Andoh, PharmD, MS, Interim Assistant Chief Pharmacy Officer, Home Infusion University of California Davis**

“Sometimes it is going to feel like a PGY-3, and that’s okay. Your boss and your team know you’re a new grad and that you won’t know everything. Take those first 6 to 12 months to absorb everything you can, repeat questions if you need, and get your feet under you - you got this.”

- **Aliyah Cruz, PharmD, MS, Pharmacy Manager, Informatics and Infusion, Cedars-Sinai**

“Be humble and work alongside staff to connect with your staff. You will learn the most about the pain points, your people, and identify early wins with frontline staff if you join them. When new to an organization or new to a role within an organization you know, do the frontline work. You are never going to make everyone happy and that is okay. If you are honest, make consistent decisions, and are transparent, staff might not always be happy with every decision but will still respect you as a leader. Have fun, learn new things and enjoy your role!”

- **Ashley Bowden, PharmD, MS, BCPS, Director of Pharmacy Operations, University of Utah Health**

“Leadership isn't about having all the answers — it's about asking the right questions and empowering others to grow. Stay curious, stay humble, and let your impact speak louder than your title.”

- **Anonymous**

Additional Resources

- [Pharmacy Administration and Leadership Residents’ Collaborative Resources](#)
- [An Integrated Approach to Career and Life Fulfillment and Planning](#)
- [Job Preparation: Interview & CV Resources](#)
- [New Practitioner Resource Center](#)
- [ASHP Leadership Center](#)

Special Acknowledgements

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For more information and questions on how to get involved with the [ASHP Pharmacy Administration and Leadership Residents' Collaborative \(PALRC\)](#), contact newpractitioners@ashp.org.

This resource was developed by the ASHP Pharmacy Administration and Leadership Residents' Collaborative, which provides members the opportunity to share resources that might assist in professional endeavors. ASHP has made reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the information presented in the document. However, any reader of the information contained in the document is advised that ASHP is not responsible for the continued currency of the information, for any errors or omissions, and/or for any consequences arising from the use of the information in the document. Any reader of the document is cautioned that ASHP makes no representation, guarantee, or warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy and appropriateness of the information contained therein and ASHP expressly disclaims all liability for the results or consequences of its use. The content of the document should not be relied upon or used as a substitute for consultation with professional advisers. ©2025 American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. All rights reserved.