

Career Builder: Caitlin Flynn, Emergency Management + Enterprise Resilience



Since arriving at NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn in 2010, Caitlin Flynn has risen from executive assistant to senior director of Emergency Management + Enterprise Resilience. Here, she discusses her career progression and how she prepares our institution for disaster scenarios.

"One of my challenges as a new manager was learning how to stop doing all the work myself," says Caitlin Flynn, senior director of Emergency Management + Enterprise Resilience. "I need to let other people do much of it so I can focus on the bigger picture."

A fast learner. I always found healthcare intriguing, but not the clinical side. I was an English major in college, and I hate the sight of blood. In January 2010, I started as a part-time intern in the Performance Improvement Department at what was then called Lutheran Medical Center. After seven months, I was promoted to executive assistant. I enjoyed working with data and collaborating with various departments to come up with quality care goals for patients and families. I learned a lot, and very quickly.

Seizing new opportunities. In 2012, I was offered a new administrative role assisting the chief medical officer and chief compliance officer. Working in the executive office provided invaluable experience. I learned who the gatekeepers were and observed the ins and outs of how the hospital ran. One day in 2013, the vice president of Safety and Emergency Management asked if I'd be interested in

interviewing for emergency management coordinator, and I was offered the job. In that role, I helped prepare and implement emergency plans and policies. The vice president and senior vice president took me under their wings and taught me all about the department, enabling me to grow in that space.

When you see a fork in the road, take it. After three years, I reached a crossroads when Lutheran became NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn in 2016. At NYU Langone Health, our department's role is split into two: safety is run by Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), whereas disaster preparation is directed by Emergency Management & Enterprise Resilience (EM+ER). I had to choose one, and I picked EM+ER because it's a relatively new profession, and I felt like I'd have room to learn and grow. A lot of people don't know or understand what we do, and while that can be challenging at times, explaining it always reminds me of all of the reasons why I love it.

Simulating emergencies to get ready for the real thing. As an emergency management specialist, I developed scenarios to prepare hospital staff for potential emergency situations, such as active shooters, bomb threats, and mass casualty incidents. I strove to make the disaster-simulation drills realistic enough to engage staff, so they'd take them seriously. Directing the drills helped prepared me for a role leading other people.

Learning to manage. In 2022, I became senior director of EM+ER, under the leadership of assistant vice president Kelly McKinney. One of my challenges

as a new manager was learning how to stop doing all the work myself. I need to let other people do much of it so I can focus on the bigger picture. I'm responsible for the oversight of staffers in Manhattan and Long Island as well as Brooklyn, where I'm still based. After the 2022 mass subway shooting that led to the treatment of 21 victims at NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn, we did a "hot washer debriefing," discussing what went well and what processes needed tweaking so we're better prepared the next time. I love tapping my creative side to come up with different disaster scenarios and testing them out. Kelly and I call ourselves "professional catastrophists," or simply "professional worriers." Every day, we help colleagues prepare for potential emergencies that would impact our staff and patients. I'm very proud to play that role.