

AAPACE- NURSING EXCEL STANDARDS

RESEARCH

The Association for the Advancement of Post-Acute Care Excellence has developed the following Standards a facility must successfully demonstrate in order to achieve Nursing ExCEL accreditation.

The Nursing ExCEL program provides a systematic process for post-acute care facilities to evaluate their current practices and identify areas for improvement, by way of the following Standards. There are eighteen Standards with each having its own substandard or element. Only those elements that are marked with an asterisk (*) are required. However, we do emphasize the significance each element plays in enhancing an organizations performance and outcomes.

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STANDARD 1: ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

The facility recognizes nurses as being an integral part of the healthcare team and its mission reflects its commitment to nursing.

- A. The role of the nurse reflects the mission of the facility (*)
- B. The members of the nursing team are aware of and understand the mission of the facility (*)
- C. The facilities mission reflects a commitment to nursing
- D. The culture and values of the facility reflects its mission
- E. The facilities strategic decisions are mission driven

Background

An organization's mission outlines the purpose of the existence of the organization. Usually, it is followed by a vision statement which is a description of the aim and future of the organization. As a tool, an organization's mission provides the direction to be taken by the members including goals, organizational culture, and practices. It is a standard for strategic planning which influences the activities of the organization.¹

Purposeful missions result in improved outcomes amongst staff, patients and the organization in general.² Therefore, the effectiveness of the mission depends on the underlying principle of its development, its content and the implementation process.² Also, for better outcomes, a healthcare organization should make the mission accessible not only to the management but also all stakeholders which enhances cohesiveness among all parties that influence the operations of the organization.

In addition, when nurses have a greater understanding of their organizations mission and their role in meeting those objectives, they are more likely to take on increased responsibility.³ While more needs to be done in this sector, good progress is being made with 17% of nurses already in leadership positions, with a further 22% considering pursuing the same.³ The remaining 61% needs to be encouraged into a leadership position through the sharing of the health sector mission.³

¹Speziale, Giuseppe. "Strategic management of a healthcare organization: engagement, behavioural indicators, and clinical performance." *European Heart Journal Supplements* (2015): 17(A): A3-A7.

²Braun, Susanne, et al. "Effectiveness of mission statements in organizations." *Journal of Management and Organization* (2012): 18(4): 430-444. Online.

³Bormann, Lorraine, and Kathleen Abrahamson. "Do staff nurse perceptions of nurse leadership behaviors influence staff nurse job satisfaction? The case of a hospital applying for Magnet® designation." *Journal of Nursing Administration* 44.4 (2014): 219-225.

STANDARD 2: ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

The facility has a published code of ethics that are clear, visible and regularly referenced.

- A. Facility has an ethics code, ethics policy or an ethics position statement (*)
- B. The nursing staff is regularly provided ethical training including topics on abuse/neglect, professional and appropriate conduct, HIPPA (*)
- C. The nursing staff is informed on facilities ethics position and references it regularly
- D. The facility has an active ethics committee that meets regularly
- E. Staff nurses participate in and are encouraged to attend the ethics committee

Background

Ethics is an integral part of how healthcare organizations operate including the decisions made by leadership and the duties performed by health workers within that organization.

In the nursing profession, ethics is given more emphasis since nurses have the professional obligation of protecting, promoting and optimizing health care. Nurses also have the responsibility of preventing, illness and injury, alleviating suffering by ensuring the right diagnosis and administering right treatment. Other nursing roles include general and personal advocacy for the individual, family community as well as other populations. Making these difficult decisions requires an ethical model or framework. Through enhanced ethical training and standards the nursing profession has received much need patient's confidence resulting in improved nursing profession's public image and staff's morale. Research conducted from four major databases on health matters in America shows a high level of trust among patients.⁴ The trust relates to better health services since 95 % of those surveyed revealed a correlation between the trust they had in the nurses and the kind of health care services that they received.⁴ According to this research, it is evident that organizational ethics have improved the kind of services that are provided by the nursing profession. Continuous ethical improvement among nurses has not only earned them the trust of patients and the community but also ensured improved health services.

In recent years, there has been increasing support for incorporating assessments of ethics quality in health organizations.⁵ Ensuring ethical practices among the employees, including nurses and physicians, improves patient outcomes which in turn, enhances health care outcomes for the entire

⁴ Birkhäuser J, Gaab J, Kossowsky J, Hasler S, Krummenacher P, Werner C, et al. (2017) Trust in the health care professional and health outcome: A meta-analysis. *PLoS ONE* 12(2): e0170988. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0170988>

⁵Ellen, Fox. "Evaluating Ethics Quality in Health Care Organizations: Looking Back and Looking Forward." *American Journal of Bioethics (AJOB) Primary Research* (2013): 4(1): 71-77. Online.

industry. In nursing, professionalism is enhanced by the quality of ethics among nurses. The patients of those healthcare providers who conducted themselves in a professional manner were noted to exhibit lesser symptoms, demonstrate an increase in healthy behaviors, and expressed greater satisfaction in treatment.⁶

⁶Johanna, Birkhauer, et al. "Trust in the health care professional and health outcome: A meta-analysis." *PLOS ONE* (2017): 12(2): e0170988. Online.

STANDARD 3: NURSING VOICE

The facility encourages and ensures input from nurses in the decision making process.

- A. Facility has an active nursing committee with representation from all levels of nursing (*)
- B. Facility administrators encourage the attendance and participation of their nurses on the committee and in meetings (*)
- C. The nursing committee allows a platform to address work related issues including but not limited to staffing, work environment and policies in a non-punitive way (*)
- D. An accessible and anonymous suggestion box is available for the nursing staff
- E. Staff concerns are regularly reviewed and addressed in a non-punitive way
- F. Nurses are involved in the accreditation process and have opportunity to provide input in the performance improvement plan

Background

According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, registered nurses make up the majority of employed healthcare workers.⁷ For the years 2014 and 2015, the total number of registered nurses was at 2.7 million out of a total of 11.8 million employed healthcare workers. Their population in the healthcare sector is followed closely with that of nursing assistants, vocational nurses and home health caregivers.⁷ With their high population in the healthcare sector, nurses are capable of making required changes in healthcare service delivery. This is further supported by Frances Hughes of the International Council of Nurses in his article, "Nurses are the voice to lead."⁸

The power and influence of nurses are also felt across different communities and societies all over the world.⁶ Nurses are able to reach out to numerous populations compared to other health professionals; this means that their voice is able to improve health care outcomes in the different institutions they work with and also in the health sector at large.⁶ The nursing voice is an important element in ensuring better nursing outcomes in healthcare delivery.⁹

Despite their numerous numbers in the sector, many countries still experience shortages of nurses due to high turnover rates. In 2015, a 16.5% turnover rate in the United States especially with young

⁷Bureau of Labor Statistics U.S. Department of Labor. "Registered nurses have highest employment in healthcare occupations; anesthesiologists earn the most." *The Economics Daily* (2015). <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/registered-nurses-have-highest-employment-in-healthcare-occupations-anesthesiologists-earn-the-most.htm>. 29 August 2018.

⁸Hughes, Frances. "Nurses are the voice to lead." *Journal of Nursing Management* (2017): 25: 83-84.

⁹Salmond W., Susan and Mercedes Echevarria. "Healthcare Transformation and Changing Roles for Nursing." *Orthopedic Nursing* (2017 January): 36(1): 12-25. Online.

registered nurses.¹⁰ A study conducted in the state of Pennsylvania revealed that improved working conditions in hospitals achieved through nursing staff empowered resulted in low turnout.³ The study showed a 5% decrease in overall turnout in the state and a drop in the number of nurses who wanted to leave the profession from 22.4% to 14.2 %, job dissatisfaction index decreased from 40%to 31.5 %.

Also to consider, despite nurses being recognized as an integral part for successfully implementing healthcare polices, few nurses and nurse leaders have been found to take part in the process of policy making.⁹ However, those nurses who do participate in policy decision making often require the support from their organizations to succeed in this role.¹¹

¹⁰Mazurenko, O. "Analyzing U.S. nurse turnover: Are nurses leaving their jobs or the profession itself?" *Journal of Hospital Administration* (2015): 4(4): 48-56. doi: 10.5430/jha.v4n4p48.

¹¹ Catallo, Cristina, Karen Spalding and Roya Haghiri-Vijeh. "Nursing Professional Organizations: What are they doing to Engage Nurses in Health Policy?" *SAGE Open* (December 2014): pages 1-9. doi: 10.1177/2158244014560534.

STANDARD 4: NURSING REGULATION

The facility consistently meets and exceeds regulatory standards.

- A. The facility complies with current local, state and federal laws. (*)
- B. The facility has no regulatory active or pending sanctions against the facility. (Sanctions defined as any survey resulting in a substandard federal/state citation or with a scope & severity of "G" or higher, or a conditional license) (*)
- C. The facility has policies and protocols in place that are current, applicable and accessible to nursing staff (*)
- D. Changes in policies and procedures are clearly and consistently communicated in a timely manner (*)

Background

Regulations in the nursing profession is a key element in ensuring the safety of patients and better health outcomes for clients as nurses are professionals who play major roles in health service delivery more than any other health professions.¹² Different regulations are put in place by governments across the world to ensure that nurses in the sector have the required qualifications and expertise to handle their responsibilities. The regulations include licenses, policies and procedures, laws and ethical and other professional standards.¹³

Healthcare organizations that uphold their nurses to the professional standards set forth by governing bodies are better able to manage their nursing staff in accordance to required regulations. In addition, because of stringent regulatory measures, there has been a decline in the number of litigation cases as a result of negligence by nursing staff. One 2016 study reviewed 6,471 legal claims spanning over 1,514 long term care facilities and found nursing care negligence accounted for a very small percentage of the claims.¹⁴

Understanding a nurse's educational training and staffing them according to their level of skill has also been proven to improve organizational outcomes.^{10 11}

¹²Hughes, Frances. "Nurses are the voice to lead." *Journal of Nursing Management* (2017): 25: 83-84.

¹³Davis, Charlotte. "The Importance of professional standards." *Nursing made Incredibly Easy* (October 2014): 12(5): page 4. doi: 10.1097/01.NME.0000452691.04516.96.

¹⁴Aiken, Linda H., et al. "The effects of nurse staffing and nurse education on patient deaths in hospitals with different nurse work environments." *Medical care* 49.12 (2011): 1047.

STANDARD 5: NURSING SUPPORT

The facility provides sufficient resources including tools, training, technology, staffing and coaching for their nurses.

- A. Nursing leadership is well versed on the roles and responsibilities for the nursing staff and are prepared to assist when needed (*)
- B. Supplemental resources are available for recently hired nurses, recent nursing graduates and agency nurses (*)
- C. The facility provides support and training for utilizing technology effectively (*)
- D. Nursing support is sufficient and available for each nursing shift
- E. The nurses are regularly provided surveys and other channels to elicit feedback
- F. The facility has a clear organizational structure and nurses are aware of the chain of command
- G. The facility has an open door policy encouraging nurses to pursue administrative guidance and address nursing concerns
- H. Staffing within the facility is sufficient to provide safe and effective care

Background

Training, tools, technology, coaching and mentoring are critical elements that play an important role in improving the care provided by nurses. Training is an important part of the modern health care system since new challenges develop daily requiring quick responses from the nursing staff. Through continuous training on emerging trends and challenges in the healthcare sector, nurses can remain abreast on current issues. Sufficient training also equips nurses to make critical lifesaving decisions. Competent bedside care and swift interventions has been shown to reduce mortality rates in ICU's.¹⁵

According to the Deloitte center for health solutions, technology has played a key role in improving the healthcare sector. Smartphones have enabled healthcare penetration to stand at 70% with over 100,000 apps developed for medical solutions.¹⁶ In the nursing sector, technology has reduced paperwork by 60 % and there has been an increase in the number of patients being seen on a daily bases as patient face time have been improved by 29%.¹² Skilled nursing facilities are increasingly utilizing Telehealth programs and technology to provide care in skilled nursing facilities resulting in

¹⁵ Garzonis, Katherine, et al. "Improving patient outcomes: effectively training healthcare staff in psychological practice skills: a mixed systematic literature review." *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 11.3 (2015): 535.

¹⁶ Spilsbury, Karen, et al. "Support matters: a mixed methods scoping study on the use of assistant staff in the delivery of community nursing services in England." (2013).

significant patient satisfaction rate rates. However, it is critical that nurses are sufficiently supported throughout the implementation of any new technology to ensure the quality and safety of care.

Nurses also often find that providing culturally competent care to be challenging when sufficient organizational support is not available.¹⁷ The support needed to provide this care can include training, tools, and language as well as culture education.¹² In order to improve organizational and patient outcomes, organizations should understand their critical role in supporting nurses when these extraordinary circumstances arise.

¹⁷Taylor, Rosemarie Angela and Mary V. Alfred. "Nurses' perceptions of the Organizational Support Needed for the Delivery of Culturally Competent Care." *Western Journal of Nursing Research* (August 2010): 32(5): 591-609. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945909354999>.

STANDARD 6: NURSING GROWTH

The facility is committed to the professional growth of nurses

- A. Nurses are provided a clear career ladder with opportunities for professional growth within the organization (*)
- B. Nurses that have received additional training and/or certifications are recognized through financial compensation and/or increased roles and responsibilities (*)
- C. Nurses are aware of and provided a clear disciplinary policy (*)
- D. Professional expectations for members of the nursing team are clear (*)
- E. The facility regularly has nurses conduct peer reviews
- F. The facility offers coaching and mentorship opportunities for nurses

Background

Career growth and progression is an integral determinant of job satisfaction. Having a clear path to professional advancement as well as having effective coaches and mentors to guide nurses in their professional development can motivate nurses to enhance their performance. While most nurses may not initially start their career with the goals of advancing into a leadership role, the National Council of State Boards notes that there is an increasing number of nurses who are aspiring to take up leadership positions.¹⁸ The percentage of nurses seeking to occupy leadership positions has grown and currently stands at 56%.¹⁸

An organization can provide opportunities for nurses' growth through mentorship and coaching programs, and through additional training and certifications. Through mentorship and coaching opportunities, nurses are able to develop new skills and identify opportunities for growth of their careers.¹⁹ In turn, cohesiveness among nursing staff is created as the scope of practice for each one expands through mentorship. Organizations promote the growth of their nurses through providing a platform and resources for them to develop their profession e.g. time allowance and funding for continued education.¹⁵ An example of an institution that looks into the growth of nurses is the American Association of Cardiovascular Nurses (AACN) which was developed to provide training to nurses

¹⁸ 2015 National Nursing Workforce Study conducted by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. Accessed from <https://www.ncsbn.org/workforce.htm>(n.d)

¹⁹ University of Texas Arlington. "Importance of Nursing Mentorship." *UTA Healthcare Articles* (October 2016). <https://academicpartnerships.uts.edu/articles/healthcare/importance-of-nursing-mentorship.aspx>.

working in critical-care units.²⁰ The institution also certifies and renews the certifications the nurses working in this sector which has shown to enhance the professionalism of nurses, improve nursing care, increase job satisfaction rates and reduce turnover rates.¹⁶

²⁰ AACN. *AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of CRITICAL-CARE NURSES*. n.d. <https://www.aacn.org/about-aacn>. 29 August 2018.

STANDARD 7: NURSE RECOGNITION

The facility encourages and awards positive behaviors exemplified by nursing staff.

- A. The facility has an employee recognition program in place that motivates and engages the nursing staff (*)
- B. Nurses are recognized for an array of categories including but not limited to professionalism, safety and caring behaviors

Background

For any profession, recognition of employees from the organization is a motivating factor in job performance. Research has identified direct relationships between nurse retention and the level of value placed on them by their institutions. An article in *Pediatric Nursing* by Ernst Mary E. et. al., discussed the need for more recognition programs for nurses and identified younger generations of nurses being particularly more receptive to recognition programs. According to the study, young nurses were more prone to job stress than older nurses and motivation was presented as an intervention strategy. Motivation through recognition and reward systems, were noted to have improved performance outcomes for nurses.²¹

Nurse recognition programs within healthcare organizations have also been found to reduce nursing turnover. According to the *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, nurse recognition was identified as a strategy to reduce turnover rates and found 55% of employees stating they would resign from their current jobs for companies that recognize and reward their efforts.^{22 23} It is important to note that nurse recognition programs do not have to be monetary as one study reported nurses and other staff were satisfied with non-monetary recognition and reward programs by their organizations.²⁰

²¹ Ernst, Mary E., et al. "Nurses' Job Satisfaction, Stress, and Recognition in a Pediatric Setting." *Pediatric Nursing* (May-June 2004): 30(3): 219-227. Online.

²² Globoforce. "The Growing Influence of Employee Recognition." Spring 2012-2013. <http://www.globoforce.com/resources/research-reports/mood-tracker-spring-2012-the-growing-influence-of-employee-recognition/>.

²³ Peterson A., Kimberly. "Recognition: Is it just a Bunch of Fluff, or Is It the Right Stuff?" *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* (January 2016). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2015.12.007>.

STANDARD 8: NURSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The facility is committed to the professional development of its nurses

- A. The nursing leadership staff are all active members of a professional nursing organization (*)
- B. At least 50% of staff nurses are active members of a professional nursing organization

Background

Frequent and rapid advancements in healthcare technology require nurses to regularly receive training on new technology as well as update their skills and knowledge to effectively perform in their work environment. Professional development is a key factor in job performance, leadership opportunities as well as an increase in improved patient and healthcare outcomes.²⁴ Sufficient training and education to enhance the skills and competencies of nurses benefits not only the nurses and the organization, but also patients.²⁵

²⁴ LSUA. *Importance of Professional Development for Nurses*. 30 August 2016.
<https://online.lsua.edu/articles/healthcare/importance-of-professional-development-for-nurses.aspx>. 29 August 2018.

STANDARD 9: NURSING EDUCATION

The facility is committed to continuously enhancing the skills and competence of its nursing staff through effective training and educational opportunities provided by qualified educators.

- A. Facilities that use training and education materials that are developed in house, have been reviewed and tested for effectiveness, applicability and accuracy (*)
- B. Annual nurse training and education is provided with on-going opportunities for those requiring additional coaching (*)
- C. Approved continuing education credits are offered or reimbursed by the facility (*)
- D. A qualified nurse educator is designated to the role of providing nurse training
- E. The nurse educator utilizes educational materials that are current and applicable, with clear objectives
- F. Education materials are adapted for different learning styles
- G. Nurses are provided with access to research journals and literature
- H. The facility has established community partnerships or clinical affiliations with institutions of higher learning

Background

Healthcare organizations play an important role in providing educational opportunities and training for their nurses for improved nursing and healthcare outcomes. Nursing education has also led to improved innovation and excellence of the nursing profession, improved working conditions in hospitals and a 4% reduction in patient mortality.¹⁴ Continuing education provides nurses with the knowledge and skills needed to maintain their license and certifications and may be required for membership by professional organizations.²⁵ The American Association of Cardiovascular Nurses is a good example of organization programs that support education and training for nurses.²⁶ Education through training of nurses is a motivating factor for nurses and reports from various studies indicate an increase with job satisfaction and morale among nurses undergoing training.²⁷

²⁵ *The Importance of Continuing Education: South University*. 12 August 2012.

<https://www.southuniversity.edu/whoware/newsroom/blog/the-importance-of-continuing-education-98201>. August 2018.

²⁶ AACN. *AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of CRITICAL-CARE NURSES*. n.d. <https://www.aacn.org/about-aacn>. 29 August 2018.

²⁷ Mansour, Nahla and Tahany Fareed. "The Impact of Training program on nurses' attitudes toward workplace violence in Jordan." *Applied Nursing Research* (May 2016): 30: 83-89.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2015.11.001>.

STANDARD 10: NURSING COHESIVENESS

The facility honors and facilitates positive working relationships.

- A. The facility regularly organizes and promotes social events to enhance staff relationships (*)
- B. The facility promotes cohesiveness with other nursing community partners (*)
- C. The work environment and culture exemplifies a good working morale amongst the nursing staff (*)
- D. The facility offers opportunities for peer-to-peer recognition

Background

Nursing cohesiveness is a measure that an organization takes to promote positive working relations among nurses and a good working environment in general. The outcomes are numerous and are not limited to organizational gains but also increased patient outcomes, personal satisfaction for nurses, high job satisfaction, and reduced turnover rates.²⁸ Cohesion also fosters better service delivery among healthcare practitioners through the reduction of stress among health providers and hence better patient outcome and reduced turnover rates.²⁹ In addition, greater nurse's dependence significantly lowers the odds of 30-day mortality and patient risk.³⁰

²⁸ Li, A., et al. "Group cohesion and Organizational commitment: protective factors for nurse residents' job satisfaction, fatigue, compassion and burnout." *Journal of Professional Nursing* (January-February 2014): 30(1): 89-99. doi: 10.1016/j.prof Nurs.2013.04.004.

²⁹ Sanko, Jill Steiner. *Exploring the Cohesion-Performance Relationship in Inter-Professional Healthcare Teams*. Dissertation. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, May 2015. Online Document.

³⁰ Rao, Aditi D., Aparna Kumar, and Matthew McHugh. "Better Nurse Autonomy Decreases the Odds of 30-Day Mortality and Failure to Rescue." *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 49.1 (2017): 73-79.

STANDARD 11: NURSING COLLABORATION

The facility provides opportunities for nurses to collaborate on care and practices.

- A. The facility performs regular care plan meetings with attendance of key nursing team members(*)
- B. Stand-up and shift summary meetings include department leaders (*)
- C. Nursing staff regularly meets with local hospital administration to ensure continuity of care and practices

Background

Collaboration and teamwork in the nursing profession involves the cooperation among nurses as well as other healthcare professions and specialties. Interprofessional and intra-professional collaboration among nurses and other health professions results in better patient outcomes and an increased quality of care delivery. In return, the impact improves healthcare and organizational outcome within the healthcare sector.³¹

³¹ Stephen, Aleena. *Fostering Interprofessional Collaboration*. 08 August 2015.
<https://campaignforaction.org/fostering-interprofessional-collaboration-healthcare/>. August 2018.

STANDARD 12: NURSING CARE

The facility regularly assesses the quality of care provided through the monitoring of patient outcomes with clear, concise, applicable, realistic and measurable objectives.

- A. Measures and goals to monitor and enhance quality of care exist for patient falls, number of re-hospitalizations and pressure ulcers (*)
- B. Nurses understand and are capable of monitoring patient care measures and outcomes (*)
- C. The facility regularly conducts Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement meetings and has a systematic performance improvement plan in place

Background

Various strategies are put in place by healthcare organizations to ensure that services offered to patients are of high quality.

The Patient-Reported Outcomes Measures (PROMs) is one tool utilized for evaluating health care quality improvement by clinicians.³² Such tools for quality assurance are progressively becoming key factors in monitoring outcomes as healthcare is gradually shifting to be a patient-centered industry.²⁹

By regularly monitoring the quality of care provided to patients, hospitals have been able to enhance the quality and safety of the care provided as well. For example, research has shown hospitals with inadequate staffing were not able to effectively monitor the quality of care provided. This resulted in a higher mortality rate for facilities that had a nurse:patient ration of 1:10 versus those facilities with a ratio of 1:6.³ It was further noted that the training and qualifications of the nurse played a significant role as well, as mortality rate were significantly reduced for those patients that received care from qualified nurses.

In the United States, there are several other tools utilized to measure patient outcomes, such as the National Institute of Health's Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) and the International Consortium for Health Outcomes Measurement (ICHOM) which proves the emphasis that has been placed on monitoring the quality of nursing care.³³

³² Hostetter, Martha and Sarah Klein. "Using Patient-Reported Outcomes to Improve Healthcare Quality." 2018. *The Commonwealth Fund*.
<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/newsletter/using-patient-reported-outcomes-improve-health-care-quality>. August 2018.

³³ Saver G., Barry, et al. "Care that Matters: Quality Measurement and Health Care." *Public Library of Science Medicine* (2015): 12(11): e1001902. doi: 0.1371/journal.pmed.1001902.

STANDARD 13: NURSING COMMUNICATION

The facility nurses engage in regular communication through means that are reliable and effective.

- A. The facility shows evidence that communication is consistently and concisely disseminated to other nursing staff in between shifts (*)
- B. Pertinent information is prioritized throughout communication (*)
- C. A clear process is in place for nurses when physicians/providers do not respond in a timely fashion (*)
- D. Nurses utilize the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation) method consistently when communicating with other health care providers (*)
- E. Audits are performed on nursing documentation and the process includes peers in the review process
- F. Communication between facility and hospital, and facility and facility is consistently concise, timely and accurate and includes provider and family notification.

Background

Communication plays an important role in any organization but in healthcare, effective communication among the stakeholders is especially critical for improved patient and organizational outcomes.³⁴

Regular and effective communication amongst nurses and between nurses and their patients has shown to reduce stress levels, anxiety, and guilt among health providers, as well as reduce symptoms among patients.³⁵ In addition, when communication strategies are improved within a healthcare system, diagnostic errors are reduced.³⁰ Nursing outcomes and professional nursing standards have also been shown to be positively influenced by timely and effective communication.³⁶

³⁴ Bello, Opeyemi. "Effective Communication in Nursing Practice: A literature review." Bachelor's Thesis. 2017. Online Document.

³⁵ Norouzinia, Roohangiz, et al. "Communication Barriers Percieved by Nurses and Patients." *Global Journal of Health Science* (2016): 8(6): 65-74. doi:10.5539/gjhs.v8n6p65.

³⁶ Ellen, Fox. "Evaluating Ethics Quality in Health Care Organizations: Looking Back and Looking Foward." *American Journal of Bioethics (AJOB) Primary Research* (2013): 4(1): 71-77. Online.

STANDARD 14: NURSING ENVIRONMENT

The facility ensures a working environment that is safe and efficient.

- A. The facility utilizes a systematic method in determining a nurse:patient staffing ratio which ensures an equitable work load for all nurses (*)
- B. The facility utilizes a systematic method in determining a nurse:patient staffing ratio which promotes the safety of both staff and patients (*)
- C. Medical and nursing supplies are regularly assessed and sufficiently stocked (*)
- D. The facility regularly monitors the number of full-time, part-time, per-diem or as needed, Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses to ensure consistent staffing of a qualified and permanent workforce (*)
- E. Measures are provided to ensure staff safety (*)
- F. Years of service and turn-over rates are regularly monitored to ensure a consistent workforce
- G. The organization culture values long-term employees which is reflected in regularly monitoring acknowledgements

Background

For safe and effective care delivery, a safe working environment must be maintained. Safe working environments for nurses were shown to have a direct correlation between the level of safety measures facilitated within an organization and positive patient outcome.³⁷ Nurse staffing should also be included in discussions where work environment is considered as “work overload” on nurses has been proven to create anxiety and stress amongst nurses which in return also negatively impacted patient outcomes.³⁸

³⁷ Kirwan, Marcia and Anne P. Scott. "The Impact of the work environment of nurses on patient safety outcomes: A multi-level modelling approach." *International Journal of Nursing studies* (2013): 50(2): 253-263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2012.08.020>.

³⁸ Borneo, Antinia, Claire Helm and Julian Russell. "Safe and Effective Staffing: Nursing Against the Odds." Policy Report. 2017.

STANDARD 15: ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES

The facility effectively utilizes Advanced Practice Nurses

- A. APN's are provided a sufficient orientation to the facilities policies, procedures and environment (*)
- B. APN's are provided guidance and support by a member of the health care team that is clearly knowledgeable on their role (preferably holding an advanced nursing degree or higher) (*)
- C. The facility clearly defines and the nursing staff is aware of the APN's roles and responsibilities(*)
- D. APN's mentor and coach the nursing staff (*)
- E. APN's are considered as part of the nursing team and included in nursing events and programs when applicable
- F. APN's are provided reasonable accommodations to document and meet with patients/family to ensure quality care and performance
- G. APN's have a clear chain of command and can receive assistance and guidance when needed
- H. The facility regularly evaluates APN's providing recommendations for improvement and recognizing strengths

Background

Advanced Practice Nurses (APN), are nurses that have received advanced medical training and therefore have greater clinical knowledge and skills than Licensed Practical and Registered Nurses. Although not doctors, APN's (also referred to as APRNs or Advanced Practice Registered Nurses) are able to perform various clinical duties such as provide comprehensive medical exams, diagnose conditions, prescribe treatments, order and analyze lab and diagnostic tests, as well as counsel and educate patients.³⁹ Increasing the autonomy of Advanced Practice Nurses has shown to directly improve healthcare and patient outcomes including improved patient satisfaction, reduction of mortality rates, decrease in length of stay for patients in critical care units and the reduction of healthcare costs.⁴⁰

³⁹ "Advanced Practice Nursing Fact Sheet." 2018. *Nurse Journal*. <https://nursejournal.org/advanced-practice/advanced-practice-nursing-fact-sheet/>. 29 2018.

⁴⁰ Brigitte F., Y. Woo, Y. Lee Jasmine X. and S. Tam Wilson W. "The Impact of the advanced practice nursing role on quality of care, clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and cost in the emergency and critical care settings: a systematic review." *Human Resource for Health* (2017): 15: 63. doi: 10.1186/s12960-017-0237-9.

STANDARD 16: NURSING IN THE COMMUNITY

Community partnerships exist for nurses which provide opportunities to promote social responsibility, provide learning experiences, raise community awareness of nurses, while benefiting the community.

- A. The facility supports and participates in community events, non-profits, local schools, charities and/or community service projects (*)

Background

Nurses spend more time with patients within a healthcare facility as well as in the public community compared to any other healthcare profession and are more likely to impact the community citizens on public health awareness.⁴¹ Organizations that support and facilitate their nurses in conducting awareness campaigns against various public health issues are subject to improved outcomes among patients and community members. Improving the work environment of community nurses through facilitation and support directly promotes patient and community outcomes.⁴² Better healthcare outcomes are as a result of the facilitation of nurses to educate, mentor, and motivate the community on different health issues and behaviors.³⁹

⁴¹ Marjaneh M., Fooladi. "The Role of Nurses in Community Awareness and Preventive Health." *International Journal of Community Based nursing and Midwifery* (October 2015): 3(4): 328-329.

⁴² Kieft, RAAM, et al. "How Nurses and their work environment affect patient experiences of the quality of care: a qualitative study." *BMC Health Services Research* (2014): 14: 249.

STANDARD 17: NURSING CARE QUALITY MEASURES

The facility utilizes a Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement program to monitor care, patient outcomes and healthcare trends.

- A. The organization utilizes reliable and effective methods for collecting and analyzing data for Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) (*)
- B. Nurses attend and actively participate in QAPI meetings (*)
- C. Nursing practice reflects knowledge of contributing factors and patient implications of re-hospitalizations (*)
- D. Nursing practice reflects knowledge of contributing factors and patient implications of patient falls (*)
- E. Nursing policies and practice reflects identifying and appropriately managing patients with high-risk diagnoses (*)
- F. Nursing policies and practices reflect identifying and appropriately managing patients on high-risk medications (*)
- G. Patient care policies and treatment guidelines are accessible to all nursing staff, written clearly and concisely, are regularly reviewed and updated as often as needed to ensure applicability (*)

Background

Measuring the performance of nurses, care services and patient outcomes is an important step in ensuring the delivery of quality and safe care. Through systematic processes, healthcare organizations are able to optimize quality assurance and performance improvement which has been proven to enhance patient and healthcare outcomes.⁴³ Quality measures for nursing care help reduce gaps in care that previously resulted in clinical errors by 26%.¹⁶ Reducing gaps in care, also improves the quality of care and reduces clinical errors and unnecessary deaths.¹⁴

Implementing systematic evaluation and improvement processes may have its challenges at first but is easier to implement and has a greater compliance and effectiveness rate when nurses are involved in the process.⁴³ Nurse involvement has also shown to increase productivity, morale and job satisfaction among nurses.⁴¹

⁴³ Albanese, MP, et al. "Engaging clinical nurses in quality and performance improvement activities." *Nursing Administration Quality* (2010): 34(3): 226-245. doi: 10.1097/NAQ.ob013e3181e702ca.

STANDARD 18: NURSES AS PATIENT EDUCATORS

Nurses are provided opportunities to empower their patients through shared knowledge.

- A. Nurses utilize their education and expertise to empower their patients by leading educational support group and workshops (*)

Background

Since nurses often have more contact with patients and their families than other healthcare professionals, they are often designated to provide educational opportunities for patients.⁴⁴ The critical role nurses play in educating patients has shown to improve medical compliance and reduce complications as 8 out of 10 nurses have reported providing patient education regularly which has shown to prevent repeat infections and reducing adverse treatment consequences.⁴⁵ Patients have also seen these benefits when nurses provide post-discharge education through follow-up calls and visits after discharge.⁴⁶

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) also play a significant role as educators for patients and their families as well as being able to guide and mentor other Registered and Practical Nurses within a healthcare organization, contributing to better patient and organizational outcomes.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Lori C., Marshall, et al. "Nurses as educators within health systems." *Mastering Patient & Family Education for Success* (2015). http://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/Vol41_4_nurses-as-educators-within-health-systems. 2018.

⁴⁵ Matt Kuhrt, Nurse practitioners play a critical role in patient education, survey says, 2017, :

⁴⁶ Balestra, Melanie. "Clinical patient education challenges and risks." *The Nurse Practitioner* 38.12 (2013): 8-11.

⁴⁷ "Advanced Practice Nursing Fact Sheet." 2018. *Nurse Journal*. <https://nursejournal.org/advanced-practice/advanced-practice-nursing-fact-sheet/>. 29 2018.

STANDARD 19: NURSES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The facility has a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan and its nurses are an integral part of its development, training and implementation.

- A. The facility has a clear and concise emergency preparedness plan to address, contain and mitigate the effects of any adverse events or threats (*)
- B. The emergency preparedness plan has a clear delineation of chain of command and the roles and responsibilities for each staff member (*)
- C. The facility provides training, at least annually for all staff, in addition to at orientation for new hires (*)
- D. All staff are aware of where and how the emergency preparedness plan can be accessed (*)

Background

Disasters in healthcare can include but are not limited to pandemics, natural (environmental) catastrophes, terrorist threats/activities, fires, security breach, and computer failure. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), 337 disasters related to natural hazards and 192 disasters related to technological hazards were reported worldwide in 2013.⁴⁸ These adverse events can have long-lasting negative physical, emotional, and financial effects on the residents, staff, healthcare administration and surrounding community. To mitigate its impact, healthcare organizations must have an emergency preparedness plan in place which includes prevention, preparedness, response and recovery processes.⁴⁹

As nurses make up the largest group of healthcare workers, they represent an indispensable workforce during disasters. Since it is the nurses that provide direct patient care and are on the front-lines during disasters, it is critical to the success of any emergency preparedness plan to ensure nurses have the knowledge and skills necessary to execute the plan effectively.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society World Disasters Report 2014—focus on culture and risk. <http://www.ifrc.org/world-disasters-report-2014> (Accessed December 12, 2020)

⁴⁹ *Emergency Management in the United States*. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/is111_unit%204.pdf. Accessed 12 Dec. 2020.

⁵⁰ Achora, Susan, and Joy K Kamanyire. "Disaster Preparedness: Need for inclusion in undergraduate nursing education." *Sultan Qaboos University medical journal* vol. 16,1 (2016): e15-9. doi:10.18295/squmj.2016.16.01.004