

# Forum

HOLY CROSS HEALTH SYSTEM

## Guide Helps Integrate Nursing Services Into Strategic Planning

To find new ways to integrate nursing services into strategic planning, Holy Cross Health System (HCHS), South Bend, IN, has issued a nursing assessment and development guide. HCHS member facilities use the guide to determine how nursing services can help them enhance their viability.

HCHS's Nurse Ex-

ecutive Council (NEC) created the assessment and development guide. Made up of nurse executives in each HCHS entity, the council advances the development of patient care in all HCHS facilities through the nurse executive vice president level.

The guide was developed to shape the vision and direction of

nursing services and to accelerate the response to new ways of integrating nursing services in the changing healthcare delivery system. Specifically, the guide:

- Helps HCHS member facilities in their nursing services
- Suggests areas for planning, development, and innovation in nursing services

- Establishes standards of excellence

- Facilitates an assessment based on those standards

- Serves as a baseline for the development of action and strategic plans

- Assists in an organization's long-range financial planning and budgeting process

### THE GUIDE'S PURPOSE

The nursing assessment and development guide serves three main purposes.

First, it provides cri-

teria for standardized assessment of nursing services. The assessment results are the foundation for the fulfillment and integration of HCHS's mission statement, which calls for fidelity to the spirit of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, excellence in the delivery of health services, empowerment of those who serve with the organization, and stewardship of human and financial resources.

Second, the guide supports continuous quality improvement initiatives within a facility. It identifies strengths and limitations of a facility's nursing services. The guide also helps an organization formulate a written plan for nursing that clearly defines and measures performance outcomes and establishes ongoing monitoring of progress.

Finally, the guide enhances nursing services' participation at the system level through initiatives to improve services systemwide and through identification of quality indicators.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDE

In 1990 the NEC appointed a core group of nurse executives to meet with the HCHS liaison to discuss the guide. They

### EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORM

#### Excellence in the Delivery of Health Services

**Preamble:** Nursing Services exists to provide compassionate, quality patient care. Consistent quality in achieving patient/family outcomes is a critical factor in market position.

Criteria	*Key Indicators	Response	Comments
1. The environment facilitates the delivery of patient care.			
	*Physical		
	*Support services		
	*Systems (i.e., computer)		
	*Demographics		
	*Nursing care delivery systems		
	*Other:		
2. Nursing care standards reflect the care needs of specific patient populations.			
	* Written standards of care		
	*Documentation in patient and/or plan of care		
	*Quality assessment and improvement activities		
	*Other:		
3. Nursing collaborates with all members of the healthcare team to manage the delivery of patient care services.			
	*Established protocols/critical paths for specific patient populations		
	*Established multidisciplinary practices		
	*Other:		

determined it would take one year to create the guide at a cost of \$40,000. They also established a work plan that included hiring a consultant to guide the development process (Marjorie Beyers, associate vice president of nursing and allied health services for Mercy Health Services, Farmington Hills, MI) and appointing a task force to identify key evaluation points for the integration of nursing services within a hospital setting. The core group from NEC, a hospital operations officer, two health system vice presidents (one from human resources and one from mission), a sister of the Holy Cross with a nursing background, and a participant in HCHS's administrative fellowship (master in health administration) program were in the task force.

The task force evaluated key issues to be included in the guide. The core group of nurse executives then reviewed the task force's evaluations. The guide was organized into these sections: excellence in the delivery of health services, empowerment of those who serve with us, stewardship of our human and financial resources, and a leadership profile.

### HOW FACILITIES USE THE GUIDE

Subsets of important issues related to these sections are identified on each assessment form. Each subset identifies criteria that include key evaluation points (see **Box**, p. 54).

To evaluate nursing services on the basis of the evaluation points, persons conducting the assessment for their facility (e.g., members of the nursing services staff, managers, other staff members or departments) rate in the response column how well nursing services meet each criterion, using the following four-point scale:

1. Nursing services have met that criterion completely.
2. Nursing services have met that criterion partially.
3. Nursing services need to improve how they meet this criterion.
4. Nursing services do not have a program in place to meet this criterion.

Facilities use the results to develop action plans to meet the criteria, allowing organizations to focus on performance improvement.

### GUIDE'S BENEFIT TO HCHS

After the HCHS Leadership Committee (i.e., officers of the

### Guide's Benefits

The nursing assessment and development guide benefits HCHS in the following ways:

- Provides a comparison of services across the system and different methods of actualizing services
- Provides a baseline assessment for future planning of programs and services at the individual organization and system levels
- Identifies areas of development and improvement at the individual organization and system levels
- Encourages sharing of systemwide expertise to address areas of development and improvement
- Assists in the development of action plans to facilitate successful JCAHO surveys
- Identifies systemwide educational needs for patient care services vice presidents and staff
- Assists in the orientation and annual evaluation of patient care vice presidents
- Serves as an assessment for the entire patient care division or for departments within the division

Holy Cross Health System Corporation and chief executive officers of each HCHS entity) endorsed the guide, two system facilities—Mount Carmel Medical Center, Columbus, OH, and Holy Cross Jordan Valley Hospital, West Jordan, UT (then a subsidiary of HCHS)—began pilot studies in 1991. Although each facility implemented the process differently, both organizations reported after approximately two months of use that the guide helped them be better prepared for Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) surveys and fulfilled expected purposes.

By advocating continuous quality improvement and maximal operational effectiveness, the nursing assessment and development guide has helped HCHS nursing leaders effect the changes needed to address evolving trends in the healthcare delivery system. The **Box** above highlights additional benefits.

### PRACTICAL USES FOR THE GUIDE

In addition to using the guide for a current system member, a multi-institutional healthcare system may also use it to assess the nursing services of a hospital considered for acquisition or sponsorship. Additionally, it can serve as a model for other clin-

ical disciplines interested in developing an assessment process. HCHS will update the guide as JCAHO standards change and recommendations for patient care delivery evolve.

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