Healthy work environments promote nurse engagement and satisfaction, and ultimately lead to safe and quality health care. Without them, nurses are likely to experience fatigue, disappointment, stress, and a desire to leave the work unit or healthcare all together.

In 2005, the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) advertised a call to action and released six standards for establishing and sustaining a healthy work environment: skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision-making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership (AACN, 2016).

When leadership creates healthier work environments, results include increased trust, open communication, decreased absenteeism, and increased quality patient care (Nayback-Beebe, et al., 2013). Evidence suggests improved satisfaction and positive outcomes for patients when nurses are involved in decision-making (Breau and Rheaume, 2014). When hard work is recognized, a sense of pride is instilled that continues throughout the course of a career. When recognition is meaningful, a desire is created to grant that same feeling or others; whether peers or patients (Maslow, 1969).

### Introduction

Skilled communicators focus on finding solutions to problems, actively work to advance collaborative relationships, utilize and become proficient in technology, and continually seek input on their own communication styles in order to improve (AACN, 2016). They work to improve visibility and communication with staff.

- **Authentic Leadership**
  - When leadership creates healthier work environments, results include increased trust, open communication, decreased absenteeism, and increased quality patient care (Nayback-Beebe, et al., 2013)
  - Encourage “Round Robin” during Professional Development Department staff meetings to update the group on individual service line activities
  - Schedule weekly huddle times or protected time to complete necessary projects
  - Encourage daily rounding within the hospital and clinic areas to improve visibility and communication with staff

- **Effective Decision Making**
  - Analyze results of annual employee engagement survey, perform needs assessment and outline goals of committee to increase scores
  - Utilize “living DIReCT” values as a framework to foster employee engagement and empowerment
  - Open invitation to committee meetings with opportunity to share, question, and suggest

- **Meaningful Recognition**
  - Utilize positive affirmations before group meetings to promote teamwork and an inclusive atmosphere
  - Encourage peer to peer recognition utilizing the STAR program
  - Celebrate individual, group, and enterprise achievement of goals and awards

- **Appropriate Staffing**
  - Sponsor team building exercises within the department
  - Hold events to allow Nursing Professional Development and Nurse Recruitment to mingle and ensure efficient and effective onboarding for new nurses
  - Host a monthly meeting between Patient Education, Professional Development, and Clinical Specialists to discuss ongoing work and organization-wide initiatives

- **Skilled Communication**
  - Skilled communicators focus on finding solutions to problems, actively work to advance collaborative relationships, utilize and become proficient in technology, and continually seek input on their own communication styles in order to improve (AACN, 2016)
  - Standardize communication that comes from the Nursing Professional Development Department
  - Encourage “Round Robin” during Professional Development Department staff meetings to update the group on individual service line activities
  - Schedule weekly huddle times or protected time to complete necessary projects
  - Encourage daily rounding within the hospital and clinic areas to improve visibility and communication with staff

- **True Collaboration**
  - In order to achieve true collaboration, every team member must accept the standard and remain active. Differing voices, personalities, and interests are included (AACN, 2016)
  - Sponsor team building exercises within the department
  - Hold events to allow Nursing Professional Development and Nurse Recruitment to mingle and ensure efficient and effective onboarding for new nurses
  - Host a monthly meeting between Patient Education, Professional Development, and Clinical Specialists to discuss ongoing work and organization-wide initiatives

- **References**

- **Group photo during a team member’s baby shower**

- **Participating in holiday team building activity**

- **Participant photo during holiday team building activity**

- **Karolyn Roberts, MSN, RN, CPN**
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  - Sponsor team building exercises within the department
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- **Marcia Alverson, MSN, RN**
  - When leadership creates healthier work environments, results include increased trust, open communication, decreased absenteeism, and increased quality patient care (Nayback-Beebe, et al., 2013)
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- **Amy Richardson, MSN, RN**
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- **Misty Whitaker, DNP, RN**
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- **References**