

Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

Statewide Innovative Nurse Workplace Environment and Staffing Councils (NWESC) Implementing of AACN Standards in Hospitals

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Purpose:

A statewide professional nursing organization established the Nurse Workplace Environment and Staffing Council (NWESC) Commission. It selected American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) *Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments* as the framework for their work in hospitals. (American Association Critical-care Nurses (AACN), 2005; AACN, 2016). The Commission's vision is that the state will be recognized as the leader in creating and sustaining a healthy work environment for its nurses.

Methods:

Beginning in 2017 with a pilot project of nine acute care hospitals, the professional nursing organization aimed to further the development of healthy work environments by developing and implementing Nursing Work Environment Staffing Councils (NWESC) in hospitals including representation on NWESC with over 50% clinical staff RNs and participative leadership for healthy workplace and staffing decisions. (Johansen, de Cordova, and Weaver, 2019). The foundation of the program began with a series of education programs with various hospitals at face-to-face programs to share knowledge and experiences regarding the six interdependent AACN standards. Additional education was supported by the utilization of the *Nursing Workplace Environment Staffing Council Evidence-based Toolkit* (Caruso, 2019). The ACCN Healthy Work Environment Tool (HWEAT), measuring the six interdependent standards of a healthy work environment (Connor et al., 2018), was utilized to assess and measure positive changes in organizations' environments.

Results:

The preliminary research in the pilot hospitals indicated an improvement over a one-year period in five of the six AACN standards. The qualitative findings revealed that NWESC members value the healthy work environment (HWE), with direct care nurses providing first-hand accounts of HWE and nurse leaders/managers describing concrete components of a HWE. (Johansen, de Cordova & Weaver, 2019). The state has 37 (50%) of the acute care hospitals representing over 20,000 RNs, actively participating in hospital based NWESC work. (Caruso et al., 2019). Following the intensive COVID experiences in the state, the NWESC 2nd Annual Retreat, held virtually in September 2020, featured exemplars on sharing the "best practices" related to each of the six standards AACN healthy work place standards during the recent COVID experience.

Conclusion:

With a commitment to increasing NWESCs at more hospitals and promoting sustainability of the AACN standards at the hospitals, the organization established its next series of educational programs to be held virtually for five to six additional hospitals starting in 2021. Sharing experiences and best practices was rated highly in the

evaluations of the NWESC 2nd Retreat. Based on the feedback, further virtual programs and podcasts are being formulated to meet the ongoing needs of the NWESCs for continuing to improve their work environments. Through the engagement of the direct care RNs and nurse leadership throughout the state embarking in this innovative initiative in creating and sustaining health work environments further research will be performed to validate improved staff and patient outcomes, furthering the staff nurse influence from the bedside to the boardroom. The professional nursing organization plans to measure and report on improved healthy work environments as other have reported through their work and surveys over time. (Ulrich, Barden, Cassidy, and Varn-Davis, 2019).

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Keywords:

AACN standards for healthy work environment, Nurse Workplace Environment and Staffing Councils (NWESC) in hospitals and implementing healthy work environments in hospitals

Abstract Summary:

A statewide nursing professional organization lead the initiative to implement AACN standards through innovative Nurse Workplace Environment and Staffing Councils (NWESC) to acute care hospitals co-lead by direct care RNs and the CNO. Over 50% of the hospitals have implemented NWESC to date with success.

Late Breaking Reason:

The positive nature of NWESC work at the individual hospital level was a basis for healthier authentic leadership, skilled communications, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and true collaboration during the height of the COVID hospitalizations.

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