

Unit Council Charter

Purpose:

The Unit Council is established to guide the continuing development of nursing practice in the unit and to empower clinical nurses with the authority to identify act as the decentralized decision making body for the unit. The Unit Council provides advice to the Nurse Manager and the Director relative to the practice of nursing and unit operations. Specifically the purposes of the councils are to:

- Professional Practice & Development
 - Address the nursing practice needs of all members of the nursing staff.
 - Participate in the development of best practice standards of nursing.
 - Promote the continuing development of professional nursing practice on the unit.
 - Share best practices in order to standardize aspects of clinical care.
- Nursing Quality & Safety
 - Promote quality nursing care and outcomes of patients and families.
 - Acknowledge nursing concerns relating to nursing care practice and come up with solutions to resolve issues.
 - Share information related to hospital committee work, UPC goals, problems (unit-based) and solutions to all staff on unit.
 - To implement an effective program to assess, measure and improve quality of nursing care and to improve hospital operations and staff and patient satisfaction.
 - For clinical nurses to evaluate peer practice.
- New Knowledge & Innovation
 - Identify clinical problems and solve clinical issues that affect nursing practice specific to the unit using evidence-based practice.
 - Create a Spirit of Inquiry resulting in Evidenced Based Practice Project & Research.
 - An education plan needs to be created for staff members who attend National State Conferences for sharing information to other staff members.

Responsibilities of the Unit Council:

- Gather professional nursing concerns related to nursing practice and the delivery of patient care and problem solve in collaboration with the Nurse Manager and other unit leadership as clinically appropriate.
- Report on hospital wide committee work relevant to improving patient and family experience, hospital operations, and RN satisfaction and employee engagement.
- Share information to all staff on the unit.
- Monitor nursing practice on an ongoing basis and make recommendations for improvement, as needed.

Decision Making and Recommendations:

- The Unit Council will use shared decision-making and consensus building as its principle method.

Attendance:

- Council members are expected to attend all meetings. Members will notify the Council chair prior to the meeting if they cannot attend, an alternate representative for the department may be requested.
- If a member has 2 or more absences within a calendar year, he/she will be requested to consider resigning or to recommit to active participation.

Frequency of Meetings:

- Meetings should occur at minimum monthly, based on unity activity. (Meetings should occur monthly for both unit based and Council based.)

Membership:

- Registered Professional Nurses and Patient Care Support Staff elected by the clinical nurses and Patient Care Support Staff assigned to the unit.
- The Nurse Manager serves as advisor and facilitator of the Council/Committee.

Eligibility:

- Full or part time employees who have completed at least 6 months of employment at Phelps Hospital.

Elections:

- Representatives and alternates to the Unit Council will be elected by clinical nurses and patient care support staff via secret ballot. Elections will be held over the first two weeks of January.

Chairperson:

- Selected by membership for 2 year tenure.
 - Communicates meeting dates, times and location to members
 - Plans the agendas for all meetings of the Unit Council.
 - Leads the discussion of the council and seek consensus.
 - Calls special meetings of the council, as needed or requested by the Director.
 - Appoints ad hoc committee members as the need arises.
 - Mentors the Co-Chairperson to assume the position of Chairperson.

Co-Chairperson:

Selected by membership for 2 year tenure.

Assists the Chairperson in the performance of duties.

- Assumes the duties of the Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson.

Other members:

- **Recorder**
 - Prepares and submits minutes to chairperson
 - Maintains attendance
- **Facilitator**
 - Keeps council focused on the agenda and on time
 - Ensures each member has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion
 - Facilitates shared decision-making and achievement of consensus
- **All members**
 - Attend and contribute to at least 60% of all meetings
 - Participate in discussion
 - Complete assigned tasks
 - Share information with colleagues of the unit

Term of Office: Unit Council elected members will serve a term of one year with the option of accepting a second year term if re-elected. Elected members will assume office on **January 1st**. All terms will expire **December 31st** of the year elected to office.

Vacancies: The Chairperson, on advice and consultation of the Co-Chairperson and the Nurse Manager, has the authority to fill vacancies as they occur. The successor will serve until the next scheduled election.

Reporting Structure:

- Agenda and meeting minutes will be distributed to all staff for review prior to each meeting.
- Members will be responsible for keeping colleagues informed regarding activities, discussions, decisions, and projects of the Unit Council by reporting back to all staff of the unit and eliciting input regarding items under consideration.

Communications

UPC members will be notified of all scheduled meetings via bulletin board, paper distribution and/or email.

Agendas: Clearly legible agendas will be given to UPC members 5 to 7 days prior to or at each meeting. Agenda items require the approval of the Chairperson or Co-Chairperson approximately 7 to 10 days prior to the next meeting.

Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes will be given to members within 7 days of all meetings.

Annual Report: An annual summary of the work of the UPC shall be submitted by the end of the year.

Amendments: The UPC charter can be changed by a 2/3 majority approval of all members.