

Hospital Staffing Committee Case Study

Providence Swedish-Edmonds/Mill Creek



Providence Swedish-Edmonds/Mill Creek’s hospital staffing committee (HSC) has evolved into a collaborative group focused on shared transparency and trust with the motto **“focusing on people first.”** When the committee was first formed, trust and communication were obstacles. Information wasn’t flowing effectively to frontline staff, and a lack of transparency created tension. A commitment to building trust, a willingness to face difficult conversations, and an emphasis on putting people first has helped create an HSC that staff are asking to join and one that is effectively meeting their tasks and responsibilities on time.

A few helpful tips include:



Plan for your Meetings

Providence Swedish has made it a habit to include direct care staff representatives in a planning session ahead of the HSC meeting to collaboratively draft agendas, align priorities, foster an open dialogue and explore the “why” behind certain decisions, helping minimize surprises and improve decision-making. These planning sessions have offered a space for hospital leaders and direct care staff representatives to have difficult conversations, leading to a better understanding of different perspectives. This has been critical in ensuring time with the larger HSC is productive and focused on solutions and action steps for overcoming hardships.



Assume Good Intentions

Hospital Staffing Committee leaders view the group “for all of us” and know everyone’s voice is important since the work of the HSC impacts every employee at every level. Thus, they have a practice of starting each meeting reading out loud good intentions, helping foster a culture where staff feel heard and are comfortable sharing their needs and challenges. Each meeting opens with a reading of a few “leadership skills for equity” that helps set the tone of the discussion and reminds all to assume everyone showed up with good intentions. Some of these skills include reminding members to actively listen, support each other and be receptive to feedback and to participate with their heart and head. This emphasis on inclusivity sets the tone for each meeting and reminds participants—whether a nurse, CNA or lab technician—that their voice is valued and respected.



We have a wonderfully dedicated team of caregivers and managers that genuinely strive to work together to improve the staffing on each unit and advance the shared cause of exemplary patient care. I have been proud to work on this committee and am so pleased with the mutual respect and teamwork that I encounter at the meetings each month. 

Jessica Oba, RN, RNC-OB, IBCLC



Follow Through

Monthly HSC meetings aren’t just for discussion; they are an opportunity for action. If there’s a problem or issue that can be solved now, HSC leadership follows through on doing so. “We don’t just talk about support; we demonstrate it in our daily actions, walking the walk as leaders who care about the well-being of our teams,” said Elina Lazo, the hospital’s Chief Nursing Officer and HSC co-chair. “And if you say you are going to something, do it,” added Lazo. Following through on your commitments fosters trust among your colleagues and counterparts.



Encourage Ongoing Dialogue

Discussions from HSC meetings have led to the formation of multiple “working groups” that act as offshoots to the HSC focused on addressing specific issues, such as workplace anxiety and how to track feedback, that arise during the HSC meetings but warrant dedicated time and attention outside of the HSC agenda. These working groups offer all staff, including those who are not voting members of the HSC, an opportunity to engage and develop solutions to challenges they identify with the goal of improving their work environments. “When you acknowledge their feelings and provide a forum to develop solutions, the staff sees and feels the results,” Lazo noted. To date, discussions in the HSC meetings have led to 10 separate working groups tackling 10 unique issue areas.



Data Driven

HSC leaders see the Human Resources (HR) department as a big partner in their efforts. The team often relies on HR to provide critical data points that help prioritize HSC conversations and demonstrate areas of success and areas that need improvement so the team can identify solutions to those areas that truly require the immediate attention of the HSC.



Openness and Transparency

In a complex and fast-paced healthcare setting, open dialogue about staffing challenges, needs, and solutions ensures that all voices are heard and respected. In addition to providing a transparent HSC process, the hospital also holds monthly open forums for staff to ask questions of core leaders on critical priorities, finances, workforce issues, patient care and safety, etc.

Looking Ahead to 2025 and Recommendations

Providence Swedish’s HSC is well on its way to submitting its hospital staffing plan ahead of the January 2025 deadline. Chief Executive Officer, Kristy Carrington, recently provided written feedback, and the committee reviewed her report line-by-line, providing HSC members with the opportunity to see her input directly, tackle questions and prepare answers.

As their HSC prepares for new nursing staffing matrices in 2025, the committee will continue to emphasize trust, equity, and transparency to ensure the committee prioritizes patient care and supports a positive, inclusive workplace.



I know we have a lot more work to do, but I’m so proud of this committee and our unified commitment to preparing a staffing plan that works based on the uniqueness of our campus and prioritizes exceptional patient care for our community. I’m also proud of our staff and broader hospital community for continually working together in the ever-changing healthcare environment.

Elina Lazo, Chief Nursing Officer and HSC co-chair