



## Nursing that Works™: Work Site Design Fact Sheet

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### 10 Ways of Implementing Current Design Concepts in Your Workplace

Healthcare environments have significant effects on the health and safety of patients and staff, efficiency of care, and staff effectiveness and morale (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2004).

Evidence shows that a well-planned facility design can improve the quality of care for patients, promote recruiting and retention of staff, and enhance operational efficiency and productivity (The Center for Health Design, 2007). Improved workplaces can lead to healthier environments; this promotes the well-being and safety of healthcare workers and patients.

Listed below are 10 ways of implementing current design concepts in your workplace.

#### 1. Become a knowledgeable change agent.

- Educate yourself on current trends in design and sustainability.
- Offer open forums at which staff members and leaders can voice their ideas.
- Identify champions among hospital staff who are knowledgeable and interested in design and environmental advocacy; invite them to serve on committees and task forces.

#### 2. Assemble a design steering committee.

- Ensure that this committee consists of formal and informal leaders.
- Include infection control nurse specialists, physicians, and representatives from all shifts.
- Develop ground rules to encourage collaboration and active participation.
- Present a vision and a mission to the committee to ensure that efforts are geared toward consideration of quality and safety.

#### 3. Promote effective communication within the committee.

- Focus on finding and achieving desirable outcomes.
- Seek to advance collaborative relationships among leaders and nursing colleagues.
- Invite and hear all relevant perspectives.
- Call upon good will and mutual respect to build a consensus and arrive at a common understanding.

#### 4. Develop and implement a process by which you and other nurses can learn about evidence-based design and sustainability.

- Disseminate information about healthcare design obtained from current literature and related websites.
- Attend relevant conferences and seminars regarding healthcare design and environmental sustainability.
- From the outset, include staff from other disciplines in the process.
- Include facilities department staff and infection control specialists.
- Invite nurse specialists and architects from architecture firms to provide educational programs.
- Prior to project execution, review phases of design and construction with an expert in the design process. Address occupancy planning and move-in logistics, as these are often forgotten.

The Center for American Nurses is a professional association whose mission is to create a community of nursing organizations that serve individual, non-union nurses by providing programs, tools and policies that address challenges and opportunities in their practice environments.

## 5. Assess the workflow process.

- Walk through existing operations, and create a map that will serve as a guide to desired changes in operations.
- Ensure that the processes drive the design, not vice versa.
- Address both clinical and operational processes.

## 6. Conduct an assessment of how planned design concepts are being implemented within your healthcare organization.

- Identify priorities for change and improvement.
- Develop an action plan that will allow analysis of results.
- Before deciding on a design process, identify evaluation criteria that can be used to assess variables before and after implementation; these will provide a means of demonstrating the success of the project.

## 7. Conduct site visits to healthcare organizations and set up interviews with staff members who have successfully implemented similar design concepts.

- Prior to planning a site visit, invest in learning about best practices and evidence-based design.
- Site visitation teams should include staff nurses, nursing leaders, physicians, auxiliary staff members, administrative leaders, and at least one design professional.
- Ideally, site teams should be interdisciplinary; consider including a patient or a family member who has experience with the hospital.
- Include staff from all shifts.
- Ask permission (ahead of time) to take pictures.
- Develop a list of questions that will guide your site visit. Include questions on process and design. Note signage that guides a visitor's way, visual appeal of the unit, noise levels, lighting, and spaces for staff and families. Assess rooms for appropriateness of location; note adjacencies and amount of space devoted to layout and function.

## 8. Ensure ongoing feedback and reflection.

- Allow interdisciplinary team members who attended site visits to make presentations to staff and leaders who did not participate and to reflect on findings.
- Offer opportunities for staff and leaders to share their own personal and professional stories about healthcare design experiences.
- Create “mock-up” rooms, in which a proposed design is laid out in an empty space. Lay out tape for marking walls; set up beds, gurneys, and real equipment; and give staff a chance to test-drive the proposed setup.

- Plan for realistic space and program needs—not just for the maximum number of beds required for future growth. Ask finance department staff to provide bed number projections.
- Develop an action plan that incorporates agreed upon concepts and tactics, and assign responsibilities.

## 9. Select an architect and an interior designer who are knowledgeable about evidence-based design and environmental sustainability.

- Candidates should be experienced with similar projects, must exhibit a willingness to listen and to respond to needs, and should respect differing perspectives; they must be able to process information and translate it into design concepts. Candidates should also be knowledgeable about evidence-based design and environmental sustainability and must work well with nurse specialists who will serve as advisors.
- Look into other healthcare organizations that have worked on similar projects, and obtain candidate references from their senior leadership.

## 10. Communicate your findings and plans with appropriate leaders to obtain buy-in and direction.

- Develop a one-page briefing/executive summary that highlights what you are trying to achieve.
- Send the briefing to hospital leaders in advance, to allow ample time for review before the meeting date arrives.
- Plan and coordinate a meeting with key leaders.

## REFERENCES

### White Papers

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### Issue Paper #1

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Institute of Medicine. (2004). Work and workspace design to prevent and mitigate errors. In *Keeping patients safe: Transforming the work environment of nurses* (Ed. A, pp. 226–285). Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

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