



Empowering Nurses

Tips and Tricks for Implementing Shared Governance

Shared Governance

Noun | shar·ed gov·er·nance \ 'sher-d'gə-vər-nən(t)s \

a professional practice model that promotes nursing empowerment and shared decision making by making staff nurses accountable for decisions that impact policies, procedures, and processes at the point of care

There is no question that shared governance is an effective technique for empowering nurses and improving patient outcomes. However, implementing it in your institution can be time consuming and overwhelming. It is a lot of work, but the positive outcomes of shared governance regularly outweigh the obstacles to implementation. Keep reading to explore the key benefits of shared governance and some tips and tricks for implementing it in your organization.

Why is implementing shared governance in nursing important?

Shared Governance...

- Promotes evidence-based practices
- Provides a framework for patient-centered care
- Improves nurse retention
- Increases job satisfaction
- Fosters professional growth
- Strengthens intraprofessional relationships

TIP #1

Form a Steering Committee

Your steering committee should be made up of nurses representing all clinical areas and nursing roles. By having a diverse group, you will ensure you are approaching shared governance from the perspective of nurses at all levels. The goal of the steering committee is to take a deep dive into shared governance. You'll want to look at your current methods for decision making and internal communication. Are there nursing service committees already in place and how are they functioning?

After you've completed the deep dive into your current protocols, the steering committee will:

- Create a mission statement for the organization regarding shared governance
- Write bylaws detailing the structure of your shared governance
- Propose a redefined nursing leadership structure
- Establish a method of communicating general information and outcomes of shared governance to staff at all levels of your organization
- Educate nurses in all clinical areas on your model of shared governance and their role in it



TIP #2

Create Your Councils

To create your councils, you can either ask for staff nurse volunteers or hold an election, and each council should elect a chairperson. If you are adopting a combined unit-based and councilor model, you will want to form three types of councils.

1. **Unit Based Council** – A unit-based council should be formed for each patient care unit and is responsible for making nursing practice decisions for that unit.
2. **Specialty Nursing Council** – The specialty nursing councils represent the nurses and practice decisions for a specific area of nursing.
3. **Coordinating or Leadership Council** – This council will coordinate activities among all councils and serve as a direct link to the organization's administration. Ideally, the Chief Nursing Officer should serve as the Leadership Council's chairperson.



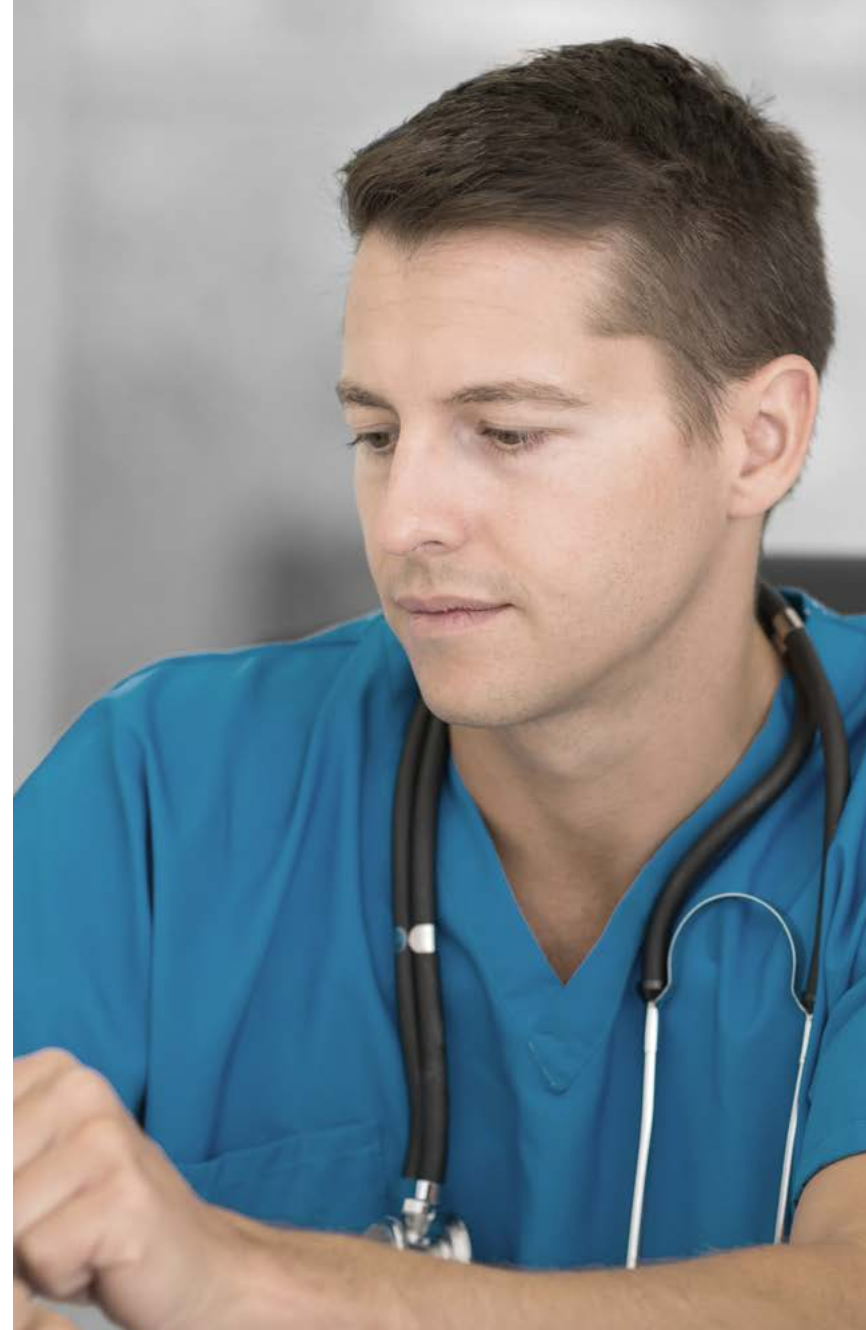
TIP #3

Establish Council Bylaws

Each council will need a set of bylaws to lay the ground rules for how the councils will operate. Bylaws should include the following:

- Standard for accepting volunteers for membership
- A maximum number of members
- The schedule and cadence for meetings - these meetings should be mandatory and should be facilitated by the chairperson
- Term limits for members and plans for member turnover
- A policy of open communication and confidentiality

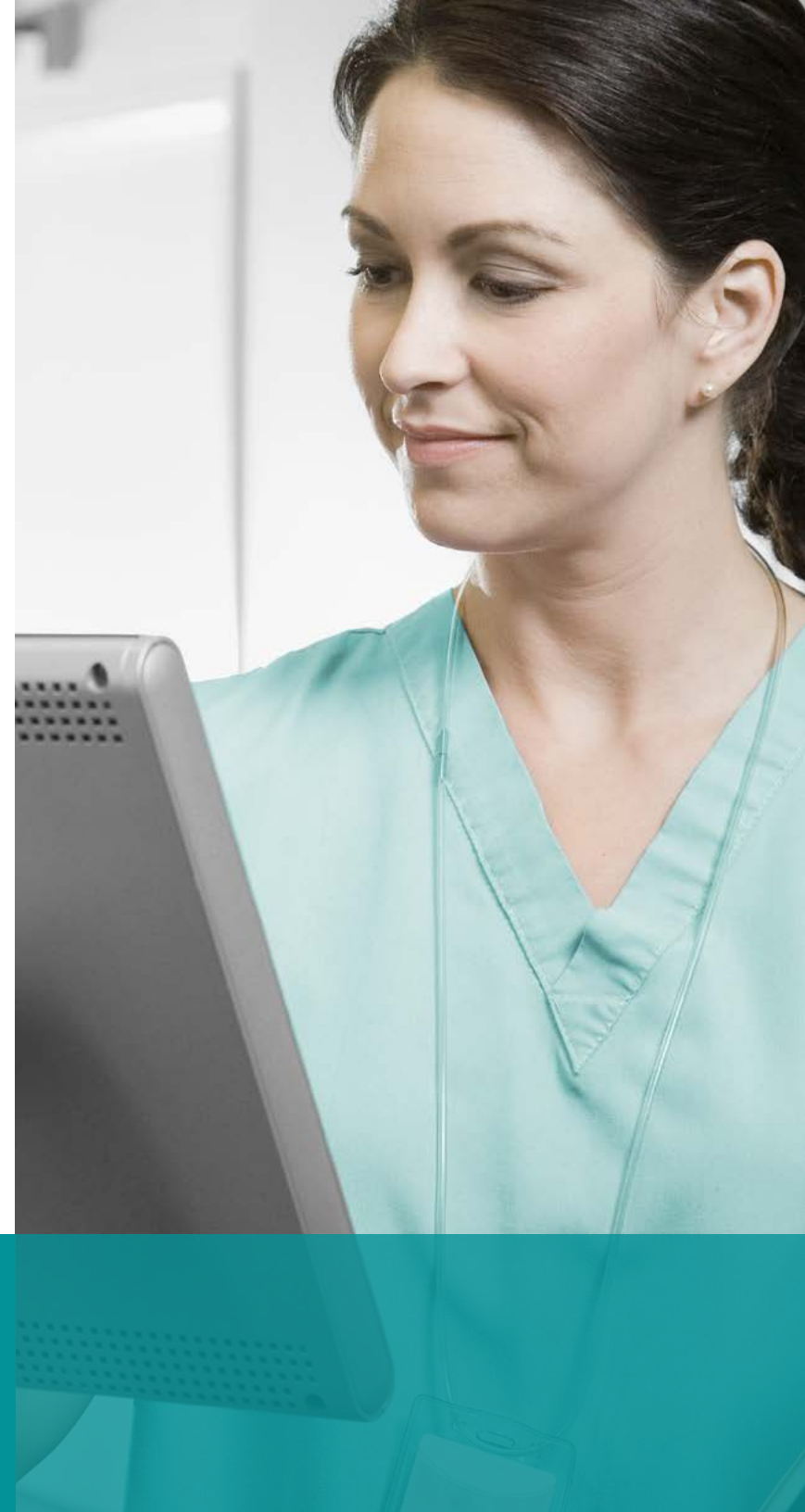
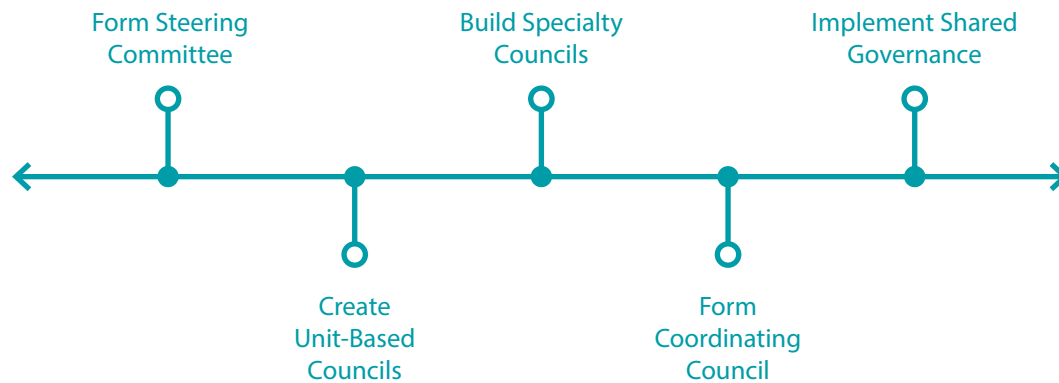
The last and most critical part of creating council bylaws is to establish guidelines for issues that are brought to the council for consideration. These guidelines will need to be communicated to all staff to encourage nurses to bring issues forward for consideration and help them understand the process and timeline for resolutions. You'll also need to determine who will be responsible for implementing the changes and explain the voting process, including the minimum number of votes required for passage of a change in policy or procedure.



TIP #4

Set a Reasonable Timeline for Implementation

As you can tell from tips one through three, there is quite a bit of work that goes into implementing shared governance. It is important to understand that implementing shared governance is a marathon not a sprint and because of that it is critical to set a sufficient and reasonable timeline for its implementation. Remember the timeline will be different for each organization depending on your nursing culture and openness to change.



TIP #5

Reinforce & Sustain Shared Governance

It's important to remember that with shared governance the job is never truly done. It's a constantly evolving practice model, and ongoing training will be needed for nurses who are transitioning into a decision-making role or who are new to the organization. You will also need to create instruments to help you and other nursing leaders evaluate the outcomes of shared governance. This will allow you to pivot and adjust your framework as needed to ensure your shared governance is producing the highest quality patient outcomes.



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