

# IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT IN GULF COAST HOSPITALS

## Step 1: Envisioning the Ideal Work Components, by Major Category

<p><b>Professionalism</b></p> <p>Core Values Include Professionalism</p> <p>Board Supports Professionalism</p> <p>Senior Leadership Participates in Establishing Professionalism as a Value</p> <p>Part of Executives' Pay is Contingent on Professionalism</p> <p>Behavior is Measured and Rewarded Based on Well Known Professional Standards and Expectations</p> <p>Selection, Evaluation, and Credentialing of Physicians and Staff Incorporate Professionalism</p> <p>Professionalism is Incorporated into the Organizational Structure</p>	<p>The hospital operates with a limited number of core values that include elements of professionalism, at least one of which relates to the treatment of hospital staff. These values permeate the organization from top to bottom.</p> <p>The CEO and board establish policies that support organizational core values, specifically including the professional behavior they expect of all patient care staff, including physicians with hospital privileges.</p> <p>The chief executive officer and other senior leaders establish and actively monitor professional behavior related to core values among staff and physicians. These leaders' behavior exemplifies the organization's values, specifically professionalism.</p> <p>A part of the chief executive officer's and senior executives' pay is contingent on system-wide improvements in professionalism.</p> <p>A code of professional conduct is widely publicized, displayed, well known and accepted by staff throughout the hospital. Statements of expected professional behaviors are included in professional's position descriptions, new employee orientation, and the evaluation system. A clearly communicated system for rewarding examples of professional behavior is in place, along with a process for remediation and sanctions where necessary. Senior leaders measure progress toward identified benchmarks and share status information with all professional staff.</p> <p>All physicians, professionals, and leadership staff are selected, evaluated, and credentialed using a competency-based model which includes those attributes of professionalism that most directly affect patient outcomes. All professional and leadership staff are evaluated using 360° performance evaluations, which incorporate professionalism. Mechanisms providing immediate and ongoing feedback on professional behavior are used without fear of retaliation. For example, such systems may use praise/early concern cards that list and describe the attributes of outstanding professionalism.</p> <p>All institutional structures incorporate professional behaviors into their policies and decision-making. Senior leaders, board members, and a representative cross-section of professionals form Professional Council charged with improving professionalism in staff relationships.</p>
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<p><b>Professionalism cont'd</b></p> <p>Team Training Creates an Environment of Professionalism</p> <p>Professionalism is Demonstrated in Medical Error Reporting</p>	<p>Patient care staff and physicians attend a series of joint training programs covering the non-technical aspects of working together as a member of an integrated, professional team.</p> <p>Professional behavior exhibited by staff and physicians includes the timely and blameless recording of all medical errors, and vigorous discussions of ways to prevent such errors in the future.</p>
<p><b>Interpersonal Communications and Teamwork</b></p> <p>Open Environment Facilitates Communication</p> <p>Shared Decision Making is Practiced</p> <p>Communication and Team Behavior Competencies are Demonstrated</p> <p>Hospital is Recognized as One of Best Places to Work in a Team</p>	<p>An open environment supports the free sharing of information, as evidenced by patient care professionals' listening, asking questions, requesting clarification of directions, questioning decisions, and contributing their expertise toward superior patient care and positive outcomes.</p> <p>Patient care professionals, especially nurses, share in decision making regarding patient care without being belittled or ridiculed by staff with more power and greater status and without fear of retaliation.</p> <p>Individually and as a team, all staff (including physicians) demonstrate established, well-known interpersonal communications and team-based behavioral competencies. This multidisciplinary team approach mitigates professional "silos" and assures a systematic, coordinated patient care practice. Education and/or credentialing on communication/professionalism formalize the importance of these competencies to the organization. These behavioral competencies are related to patient care outcomes, not to the preferences, needs, or desires of the patient care professional, ensuring that the system is patient-driven, not provider-driven.</p> <p>Patient care professionals recognize the hospital as one of the best places in the Gulf Coast region to work, specifically because of its team-oriented environment.</p>

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<b>Staff Training and Development</b>	
A Strong Commitment to Lifelong Learning is Demonstrated	Hospital management has made a strong commitment to lifelong learning for all staff, encouraging and financially supporting the professional and personal development of staff, both on and off the job.
Staff Pursuit of Career Development is Supported	The hospital provides financial assistance and manager/peer support to encourage staff to pursue career development opportunities.
Career Counseling is Available On-Site	The hospital provides career counseling on-site, including information about well-defined paths to career goals within as well as outside of the hospital and healthcare industry.
Ongoing, Comprehensive Mentoring Programs are Provided	The hospital provides ongoing and comprehensive mentoring programs for professionals and leaders to foster improved performance, ongoing development, and satisfaction.
Senior Leaders and Managers Receive Ongoing Training	Senior leaders and managers throughout the organization receive ongoing training to develop their leadership and management skills and establish expected behaviors, especially management training for professional and technical staff in supervisory and management positions.
Training Supports Diverse Work Environments	Hospital staff (including physicians with privileges) receive training in managing and working in environments that are increasingly diverse ethnically, racially, and socio-economically.
Training Supports Business Issues	The hospital provides programs to teach staff the knowledge and skills they need to understand and participate in discussions of organizational strategic and operational issues.
Staff Instructors are Provided for Nursing Schools	The hospital provides paid opportunities for qualified staff to teach in area nursing schools or provides financial assistance for nursing schools to hire faculty.
Hospital Collaborates with Providers of Education for Career and Professional Development	The hospital collaborates with providers of education in order to: design knowledge and skill development curricula which prepare students for patient care careers, and provide professional development opportunities for employees.
Cutting Edge Technology is Used for Delivery of Training	The hospital uses cutting-edge technology for the design and delivery of staff training and development and provides training in new technologies.

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<b>Environmental Factors</b>	
Staff Participate in Decision Making	Executives and direct patient care professionals, including nurses, participate in strategic and operational decision making throughout the hospital.
Factors Affecting Retention are Identified	The hospital continually strives to improve its retention of patient care professionals, including nurses and other staff difficult to recruit and retain, by using an independent entity to survey those employees who continue to work at the hospital, as well as those who leave, to determine what factors affect their decisions.
A Safe Work Environment is Created	The hospital creates a safe work environment. For example, the hospital has systems in place for reducing needle stick injuries and back injuries resulting from a lack of ergonomic devices for lifting patients.
Decisions About Staff Workload are Data-Driven	Decisions about staff workloads are driven primarily by data indicating quality of care, cost effective care and patient satisfaction outcomes, which are benchmarked against recognized industry standards.
Schedules Support Balanced Work and Home Life	The hospital supports the principles of balanced work and home life, specifically including staffing and scheduling mechanisms that accommodate the professional and personal needs and preferences of all professional staff, especially nurses.
Preceptors are Dedicated	The hospital dedicates experienced nurses to the sole assignment of serving as preceptors/mentors for new nurses for up to 18 months after they are hired.
Work is Designed to be Meaningful and Rewarding	The hospital has designed processes, procedures, and job responsibilities that continually promote a positive work environment and improve patient care outcomes, making work more meaningful and rewarding for nurses and other patient care professionals.
Patients and Staff Have Positive Perceptions of Staff	Patients and staff have positive attitudes toward patient care staff both within their hospital and across the industry as a whole.
Accommodations are Provided for Older Patient Care Professionals	The hospital has taken specific action to make the work environment more accommodating for older patient care professionals, especially nurses. For example, they provide ergonomic equipment, early retirement options that encourage retention, part-time work options, and staffing and workload adjustments.

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<p><b>Economic Considerations</b></p> <p>Total Compensation is High for Point of Service Jobs</p> <p>Patient Care Total Compensation is Superior to Less Stressful Work</p> <p>Compensation and Work Environment Create Positive Career Options, Increasing Retention</p> <p>Compensation is Based on Demonstrated Core Competencies</p>	<p>Compensation and benefits packages are designed to pay patient care professionals well who work at the point of service.</p> <p>Compensation and benefits packages for patient care professionals are superior to those available in less stressful work environments within and outside of healthcare.</p> <p>Compensation and benefits combine with a positive work environment to present desirable career options and improve the retention of professionals.</p> <p>Compensation is based on the demonstration of core competencies, including the non-technical aspects of professionalism.</p>
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#### **Work Environment Workgroup Members:**

Mark Wallace, Texas Children's Hospital, Co-Chair  
Susie Distefano, Texas Children's Hospital, Co-Chair  
Rachel Caillouet, Baylor College of Medicine  
John Crossley, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center  
Kim David, HEALTHSOUTH  
Cheryl Day, University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston  
Nancy Edgar, HCA – Gulf Coast Division  
Laura Fortin, CHRISTUS Health St. Joseph Hospital  
Irene Helsing, St. Luke's Episcopal Health System  
Deloris Leftridge, Houston VA Medical Center  
Cathy Moniaci, Shriners Hospitals for Children – Houston  
Penny Nolan, Polly Ryon Memorial Hospital  
Fred Pluckhorn, The Methodist Hospital  
Susan Shelander, Memorial Hermann Healthcare System  
Kathy Shingleton, University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston  
Lynn Wieck, Texas Nurses Association  
Myrtle Williams, Texas Children's Hospital