



Protect Patient Safety & Access: Hospital Patient Care Unit Staffing Innovation Collaborative

Background

Washington is not immune to the nationwide nursing workforce shortage. There are not enough licensed nurses in Washington to fill the thousands of RN vacancies in our hospitals, and there is no single, simple solution. The solutions center on attracting already-trained nurses, training new nurses and retaining existing nurses. Retaining the current workforce will require innovative hospital staffing and patient care models that balance the growing needs of patients with the reality of staffing shortages. To that end, we need to start thinking differently about how we staff our hospitals.

WSHA Position

WSHA supports establishing the Washington State Hospital Patient Care Unit Staffing Innovation Collaborative. The purpose of the independently staffed, multi-disciplinary collaborative of experts will be to enhance the understanding of innovative hospital care delivery models — such as those that integrate onsite team-based care delivery, use of patient monitoring equipment and technology, and virtual or remote care delivery — across Washington State.

The collaborative will identify and analyze innovative hospital staffing and care delivery models; evaluate the feasibility of implementing the models; select which models to disseminate across the state; and determine whether to create a technical assistance center to support implementation of the models. They will report on their work annually in 2025, 2026 and 2027.

Key Messages

Safe hospital staffing balances the needs of the patient and family with the knowledge, skills and abilities of the direct patient care staff. Since the condition of patients constantly fluctuates, flexible nurse staffing that goes beyond fixed nurse-to-patient ratios is critical. We must go beyond outdated, one-size-fits-all models and modernize the way we deliver care to patients.

- Experts in hospital patient care delivery must work together to develop new staffing solutions that advance patient outcomes while ensuring a better work environment for direct patient care staff.
- These experts must also identify and disseminate innovations in patient care delivery, such as team-based care models and adoption of technology, to ease the daily stress experienced by bedside nurses.

Contact Information

Ashlen Strong, JD, MPH
Senior Director, Government Affairs
AshlenS@wsha.org | 206.216.2550

Lisa Thatcher
WSHA Lobbyist
LisaThatcher@comcast.net | 253.686.8746