Review Article

The Development of Policy on Nursing Cross Training in a Healthcare Organization

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Abstract

The Policy provides a consistent framework for operational guidelines and standardized processes for decision making. Policy Development Framework provides protocols and clarifies roles and responsibilities in the policy development process. This article aims to document and discuss the process of development cross training policy formulation, including its practice and outcomes. In this policy, we developed the cross training framework including definitions, purpose and procedures that reflect the scope of policy analysis. This comprehensive conceptual framework may serve as a "road map" for researchers and healthcare policymakers who are interested in the development, monitoring, implementation, and analysis of nursing cross training policies.
Keyword: Policy Development, Policy Framework, Policy Standardization, Nursing Cross training.

INTRODUCTION

Policy Development involves planning how to develop, draft, and prepare for enactment of the policy. Creating a strategy and drafting the policy can help you make the policy option you selected actionable. This process may look different depending on the policy you selected. The Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) developed a framework that encompasses 6 steps in Policy development as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: CDC Framework for Policy Development

Policy Development Framework
1) Initiate: Policy Owner initiates the policy development or review process.
2) Draft: Policy Owner addresses policy gaps or needs; drafts or reviews policy; and provides a draft to the Manager, Policy and Governance for review.
3) Feedback: Relevant Stakeholders who may be affected are consulted about the policy.
4) Review: Final review by Manager, Policy and Governance before submission to the appropriate Approval Body.
5) Approval: Presented for approval to the Policy Approval Body.
6) Communication: Policy Owners create a communication plan to ensure policy is communicated to the College Community.
7) Implementation: Policy Owners ensure that policy is implemented after a new or revised policy is introduced to the College Community.

A Cross Training Policy was developed to meet the nurse staffing requirements (as defined by patient care needs), while also providing an opportunity for the nurses to attain or improve their skills. Cross training is a structured program designed for nurses who will fill critical shortages in other departments of the facility in which they are employed. Usually, this involves working with patients who are severely ill, such as those in critical care or progressive care units. Many hospitals and facilities choose to cross train nurses to increase flexibility and durability for the staff, among other reasons, as per the below.

Benefits of Cross Training:
1. Mitigates Nurse Staffing Shortages
Cross training of nurses is an approach used by hospitals to mitigate anticipated nurse staffing shortages (Patel, *et al.*, 2021).

2. Creates a Flexible Workforce
Cross training gives a responsive, flexible backup plan.

3. Saves Money
If one of the team members is sick or goes on vacation, there's no need to hire a temporary worker; existing team members can fill the gap until they return.

4. Enables You to React Quickly to Changing Goals and Conditions
Because your team is trained and flexible, it can easily handle fluctuations in workflow. Cross-training can also help you to deal with workflow bottlenecks.

5. Strengthen Team Relationships
When team members can see and understand what others do, they're far more willing to lend a hand when someone falls behind. They're also able to help out more, because they've learned what other team members do.

6. Improves Satisfaction
Many people like being challenged, and enjoy learning new skills, so setting aside time for cross-training can help keep your team interested and engaged.

Developing a Cross Training Program:
1. Identify Roles and Responsibilities
Make a list of everyone on your team, along with their job descriptions. Spend some time thinking about the knowledge and skills needed for each position, as well as the unique strengths that each person brings to the team.

2. Cross-Reference Skills
Next, match each position with the right potential cross trainee. Try to pair positions that require similar skills and strengths.

For instance, imagine that your cross trainee is a Pediatric Critical Care Nurse and she is a natural multitasker. They're very detail-oriented, and they work effectively in high-stress situations. Because of their unique strengths, knowledge and skills they could easily be cross-trained in the role of the NICU, since that position is also stressful and requires someone who can handle many demands at once. They also know and understand your customers' needs.

3. Identify the Method
Once you've identified the team members who should be cross trained for each role, you need to think about how they should be trained.

Approaches include:
- On-the job training: this is when a team member follows or "shadows" another team member for a period of time to learn new skills. When you set this up, bear in mind that not everyone is an effective trainer naturally – you may need to teach them how to train their colleagues. On-the-job training can be the most effective cross training technique, as learning takes place under normal working conditions.
- Instructor-Led Training: this is often the most efficient training because one instructor can teach many people at the same time. However, for training to be effective, people must then have the opportunity to put the skills they've learned into practice in a working environment.
- E-Learning/Online Training – this can be beneficial, because team members can learn at their desks, at a time that suits them. However, as with instructor-led training, people must

have the opportunity to practice skills live in the workplace.

4. Explain the Benefits
- Before you implement a cross training program with your team, it's important to explain why you're doing it, so that people understand why you want them to be trained in multiple roles.
- This will help people to see that cross-training is a positive exercise, rather than a negative one.

5. Get Training!
- Once you have planned the cross-training program and people understand why they should cross-train one another, it's time to get going.
- Launch the program, make sure that the training is happening, give people the support they need to be successful, provide opportunities to apply skills, and follow- up to ensure that the training has been successful.
- Learning objectives must be clearly set and educational methodologies (strategies) will be planned. Some of these strategies include, but are not limited to:
  - o Self-Learning Packages
  - o Demonstration of Skills (including Bedside Teaching)
  - o Knowledge Enhancement through Presentations

6. Rotate Tasks
- People lose knowledge if they don't use it regularly. Once your team has gone through a cross-training process, consider implementing a rotation plan so that every few months, members of your team spend a half or a full day working in the role they've cross-trained for.
- Not only this will help to keep their training fresh, but it will also add challenge and interest to their work.

1. Get Feedback
- Encourage your team to give feedback and to offer suggestions on developing the cross-training program.
- This feedback will help you to improve how you train your people in the future.

Policy Development:
This policy will be applied to all Nurses at Ministry of Interior Medical Services. Cross Training is an interdepartmental orientation and training within another nursing unit, with the goal of achieving competency to provide patient management and care within this other unit.

Step 1: Identity, analyze, and describe the problem.
In recent years, the demand for health services has increased, leading to a fundamental problem of nurse shortages. One of the effective strategies to deal with this problem is to use the cross-trained nurses. Training and development programs provide a host of benefits. They enhance employee performance, boost employee productivity, reduce employee turnover, and improve company culture. Cross training can produce more collaborative employees, bring significant return on investment, create workforce sustainability, increase employee engagement and improve productivity and efficiency. Cross-training is the practice of providing employees with education and training in various areas of a hospital's operations to increase their flexibility and versatility.

Step 2: Evaluate levels of support, capacity, and readiness.
Cross-training applies the idle nurses to work in areas with heavy demand. One of the effective approaches to deal with the nurse shortage uses cross-trained nurses and results in reducing the staffing costs and increasing the nurse's profit.

Step 3: Outline the policy options and objectives:
a) To meet the nurse staffing requirements as defined by patient care needs, while also providing an opportunity for the nurses to attain or improve their skills.
b) To provide educational support for the temporary assignment of nurses in areas outside their primary clinical assignment in response to changing patient populations, staff shortages, or other organization's requirements.
c) To ensure the continuity of delivering safe, high-quality nursing care.

Step 4: Identify key decision makers and influencers.
The main decision-makers are the Head Nurse (HN), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Charge Nurse (CN) and the Preceptors.

Step 5: Build support among decision makers and stakeholders for the new policy.
Support from Head nurse and Nursing Administration.

Step 6: Write and revise the policy.
Research findings will be used to develop this policy, and a thorough description of how cross training can improve the staff shortage and the flow of work. Additionally, the researcher will include motivating factors, such as the advantages of cross training and any obstacles that may hinder the policy's effectiveness.

Step 7: Implement the policy
a) The cross training of nurses ensures that when nursing staff are assigned out of their normal

working area, they are equipped with the competency required for safe and effective patient care.

b) The Nursing Administration should maintains a List of Cross-Trained Nurses and makes it available for all nursing units.

c) Cross training will be communicated as deemed necessary by the Nursing Administration to assist in meeting the staffing requirements of the unit.

d) Assess the nurses' level of competency for cross training.

e) The Nursing Education and Training Division (represented by CNS's and HN's will conduct a Training Need Analysis (TNA) to identify the gaps in knowledge and skills that need to be covered during the conduct of the cross training program.

f) The minimal requirements for an initial cross training include the following:

- Meeting the required qualifications.
- The nurse requires previous experience and background in the area that the nurse will be cross trained, (e.g., critical care nurses to medical and surgical units, Labor & Delivery staff to maternity units, NICU staff to the nursery or pediatric units).
- The nurse must be willing to work in the cross training unit for 3 months to gain and maintain competencies and to attend unit-specific in services and meetings.
- Adherence to the terms of the cross training agreement.

g) Cross Training will be prioritized according to the unit requirements.

h) Criteria for Selection:

- An assessment of the nurse's background and experience in the areas related to those of the temporary assignment.
- Generic and unit-specific competency records.
- A representative from Nursing Administration, HN, and CNS should meet with the nurse and assessing the nurse's ability to meet the requirements for the temporary assignment.
- Referring to the unit record of the frequency nurses are sent on temporary assignments, to avoid sending the same nurses too often.

i) Conduct of Training

- Roles of the trainee, trainer, Head Nurse and Nursing Education must be clearly identified in the cross training program.
- Nurses must inform the Head Nurse (HN)/Charge Nurse (CN) or Shift Supervisor if they lack any skill or knowledge required to safely provide the assigned care expected of them in a temporary assignment.

- Any challenge must be brought to the immediate attention of the Nursing Administration by the HN/CN.
- Nurses on temporary assignment are given a condensed orientation to the unit by the HN/CN/Preceptor concentrating on the specific features of that unit that are different to the unit the nurse came from.

Step 8: Assess and monitor the policy on an ongoing basis.

Evaluation of the Completion of Training:

A) Nurses must be provided with sufficient educational and clinical support, to ensure that they are confident in delivering their new role. Some of the evaluative tools will include, but are not limited to:

- Having achieved the expected level of competency within the specified unit through documented orientation, training and experience.
- Willing to work on the cross training unit for the established amount of time, to maintain competencies and to attend unit-specific in services and meetings.
- Competency Checklist

B) Measuring Cross Training Programs:

- Direct observation by HN/CNS/CN/Preceptors.
- Feedback/evaluation from the staff and HN/CNS/CN/Preceptors.
- Performance Evaluation.
- Maintenance of staff competency records in Human Resources/Personnel File.

C) Individualized Cross Training Program will be matched against the objectives to see if the objectives were met.

CONCLUSION

Cross training policy has been developed by healthcare facilities in order to support the fluctuating nursing staff demands of hospital units. Staff with similar skill sets will be cross trained with education and clinical support. Cross trained nurses will be developing new skills and confidence in patient care delivery. It is evident that patients will receive optimal care with more skilled and flexible nursing staff.

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Author Contributions

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