
Shared Governance Implementation Manual

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Illustrated

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Special Note

References to gender and the pronouns in this book are often feminine. While the author recognizes that there are nurses who are men, he also acknowledges that a large majority of nurses are women and defers to that reality. In so doing, no offense to either gender is implied or intended.

Introduction: Getting started with shared governance

This manual is meant to be a support “tool” for those interested in pursuing an organized effort to implement shared governance in their organization. While the focus is on the beginning phases of implementing a clinical model of shared governance, the process can be applied to any setting. Any one of the professions can use the information included in this workbook for implementing the shared governance concept in its unique setting.

This manual will be most useful when used in conjunction with the book, **Implementing Shared Governance: Creating a Professional Organization** (Mosby–Year Book, 1992). When used together, these two books provide a solid framework for effectively initiating the shared governance concept in any clinical service setting. Included in Appendix A of this book is an extensive bibliography of other resources that are helpful with specific components of implementing shared governance. For those looking for additional support, a number of facilities implementing shared governance have been identified in Appendix B. These facilities are committed to the process of shared governance and have in place resources to assist those who are interested in the developmental processes associated with implementing shared governance. The reader should be advised that some of these facilities offer implementation assistance as a part of their business operation and therefore may charge for their services. The subject of cost should be raised before asking for consultation or informational support from any facility listed in this manual.

The processes identified in this workbook are presented in a logical developmental sequence beginning with the concept of shared governance and ending with sample by-laws. Not all settings will require the information contained in every chapter. The book has been designed to facilitate broad use. Chapters that are of interest to the reader should be used as a support or for information, as required. Each chapter can stand alone and therefore can be used out of sequence with the others. The reader should be aware, however, that each chapter is essential to the process of implementation.

While this manual attempts to address the major implementation issues, it should not be used as a unilateral resource for implementation. It should be used in conjunction with other information resources. Together with other information, the reader will gain a comprehensive sense of the characteristics of implementation and how to achieve a successful shared governance organization.

Manuals and other documents that facilitate the developmental process are always in transition. The reader should evaluate the information contained herein with a critical eye; suggestions for improvements are welcomed. Please direct your suggestions to the publisher at the address listed on p. iv. Much of the success of shared governance has emerged because those implementing it were willing to share their experiences and to work diligently to improve the conditions and circumstances that support it. It is hoped that the reader’s willingness to share will continue to enhance this manual and help refine it for future implementation of shared governance concepts.

It is also hoped that the implementation of shared governance concepts will be both an exciting and a personally rewarding process. It is a process involving constant transition and requires good judgment, patience, and commitment. The processes outlined in this manual may take varying lengths of time to implement. Each institution has its own unique variables that will influence how the process unfolds. Appendix E contains a sample implementation timeline that may be helpful to some readers. Sharing information and letting the process run its course are the two pieces of advice that will be most helpful in successfully implementing shared governance.

While this manual reflects 11 years of experience in the implementation of shared governance models, it is not conclusive. One of the dynamics of the implementation process is that more information is constantly becoming available as each setting learns something new about implementation and new models unfold. However, the principles of shared governance are consistent and have been

incorporated in this manual (refer to Chapter 1 in **Implementing Shared Governance**).

The processes of implementing shared governance are challenging. They demand major organizational and systems changes. However, they should also be fun. An organized and systematic approach to implementation provides an opportunity to write a script that facilitates the relationships among nurses and between nurses and others in the health care enterprise. It allows for large doses of humor, tears, good times, and challenge. Intense dialogue and controversy are characteristics of a major system change and should be expected (refer to Chapter 2 in **Implementing Shared Governance**).

Implementing shared governance is not a noiseless process. There will be many who will raise questions and demand responses, some who will not agree with the idea and fail to support it, and some who will grow to accept it as they come to understand what it means. Some of the leaders in the organization will be totally supportive of the efforts to empower the staff, while others will fight to see that it never happens. Most people will fall somewhere between these two extremes. All of this is a part of the dynamics of the implementation process and should be expected. Anything that creates as much potential for ownership and makes as much change as does shared governance

cannot help but strike some significant chords in the organization and raise some important issues.

Shared governance often demands a willingness to build on trust and to create it when it is not present. There must be honesty in the organization that supports the effort. There can be no secrets in the implementation of shared governance. In fact, the opposite is true. As much information as is reasonable must be made available to the staff to support their involvement. This process alone increases the effectiveness and esprit de corps in the nursing organization. This will create challenge and raise questions, sometimes from unusual places, questions that demand open and honest responses.

It is hoped that this manual will be a valuable tool for those implementing shared governance. I hope that those who take the risk will be present to reap the rewards. The professions will change their roles and relationships within the health care system as each profession changes the places in which it does its work (not just at the national policy and professional level). It is in the places where staff practice their profession that change will be most meaningful and real. It is in these places where that change will also have the greatest impact. To the extent this manual helps in that process, it will have fulfilled its purpose.