



## Shared Governance, a Destination on the Magnet Journey®

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When an organization embarks on, or continues on a Magnet Journey®, certain foundational structures and processes must be in place. Structural empowerment is one of five Magnet® model components, and as such organizations need to provide evidence that shared decision making is enculturated in the organization. Foundational organizational documents must address nurses' involvement in shared decision making at the unit and at the organizational level.

As a principle of shared governance, nurses must participate in decision making concerning practice, the practice environment, and opportunities for improvement. Shared governance is a venue for clinical nurses to sit at the table, along with management/organizational leaders and interprofessional partners to contribute ideas and participate in decisions affecting their practice. This process allows point of service decision making and is built on a strong collaboration between clinical nurses, those supporting clinical nurses, and others providing care/contact with the patient.

For shared decision making to work in organizations often a shift in the decision-making process takes place. As clinical staff take on the responsibility, authority, and accountability for decisions, leadership is letting go of some control in the decision-making process. In organizations new to shared governance, this can cause angst until the process becomes more comfortable, trust is built, expectations are outlined ahead of time, and goals and outcomes are clearly defined. Often in the beginning stages and during times of revitalization of shared governance, organizations may need support from entities outside of the organization.

In a Magnet® environment clinical staff and leadership work together to create the best possible solution for the organization and ultimately the patients they serve. Sometimes the best possible solution does not happen on the first try, but in a shared decision making organization there is opportunity to learn from decisions that didn't go as well as expected, and adjust the process for future decisions. Leadership plays a vital role in supporting clinical nurses, and clinical nurses look to leadership for mentoring opportunities and as a valuable resource.

In addition to shared governance being woven into a Professional Practice Model (PPM), there are sources of evidence that organizations on a Magnet® journey must address regarding the PPM. Throughout the Magnet Application Manual® organizations on a Magnet Journey® provide examples and evidence of how shared governance works in their organizations, and boast the exemplary outcomes that emerge as a result of shared decision making in their organization.

Shared governance is not a structure that is only necessary if one is pursuing national recognition. Shared governance is essential for all organizations that are concerned with providing optimal care for patients,

families, and health care providers. It provides a venue for those providing care to have a voice to make decisions regarding the care. Those closest to the care often are able to outline what will work, how to make it work, and are more engaged in the processes. Shared governance is a way for clinical staff and leadership to discuss issues that ultimately can improve patient care, and workplace outcomes. Shared governance is an essential step on the journey to staff empowerment, ownership of practice and important for all organizations as they pursue excellence as externally measured by receipt of Magnet® designation.