



# East Adams Rural Healthcare

**Hospital Staffing Charter**

**Adams Country Hospital District 2**

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**Hospital Staffing Charter**  
**Adams Country Hospital District 2**

<b>Date Reviewed:</b>	<b>06.12.2024</b>	<b>Committee Leadership Co-chair:</b>	<b>Lurisa Sackman</b>
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	<b>06.2025</b>	<b>Committee Staff Co-chair:</b>	<b>Lori Gosman</b>

**Purpose**

The hospital staffing committee is established by East Adams Rural Healthcare to develop a staffing plan and guide unit based direct care staffing practices to promote quality patient care.

The committee will establish a mechanism whereby direct care staff and hospital management participate in a collaborative process regarding decisions about direct care staffing.

**Scope**

The primary responsibilities of the staffing committee are to:

1. Development and oversight of an annual patient care unit and shift-based hospital staffing plan for Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Certified Nursing Assistant, and unlicensed assistive personnel providing direct patient care based on the needs of the patients.
2. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the staffing plan semi-annually against patient needs and known evidence based staffing information, including nurse sensitive quality indicators collected by the hospital.
3. Review, assess, and respond to staffing variations, concerns, or complaints presented to the committee.

The staffing plan is for the hospital (as defined in RCW 70.41.020 and state hospitals as defined in RCW 72.23.010) where nursing staff deliver care.

Emergency Department/Med Surge

**Selection of members**

The staffing committee will consist of 6 members made up of direct care staff and hospital leadership. At least 50 percent of the voting committee membership will be RNs, LPNs and CNAs, who are nonsupervisory and nonmanagerial, currently providing direct patient care.

Not more than 50 percent of the total committee voting membership of the committee will be selected by the hospital administration and shall include the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Nursing Officer, and Nurse Manager.

Nursing staff voting members will be selected according to the following process:

Nursing Staff volunteer to serve on the committee. If there are more than 3 nursing staff interested in serving on the committee, there will be an election process in which ballots are sent out to nursing staff to vote. Each committee member will serve for one year and rotate on/off the committee in July. Committee members are able to serve more than one consecutive term.

General committee meetings are open for any interested staff employed by East Adams Rural Healthcare to attend and contribute to discussion, but only selected committee members may have a vote. Individuals who are not employed by the hospital may attend and contribute to the discussion at the discretion of the committee co-chairs but may not have a vote. Individuals who are not members of the committee may be asked not to attend committee meetings if their participation becomes a hindrance to respectful and productive discussion or the

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collaborative problem-solving process. Interested non-members who are not able to attend a meeting are encouraged to share their input with a committee member who can represent their interests during the meeting. Meetings in which hospital finances, patient outcomes and other data of a sensitive nature are discussed will be limited to committee members only. The committee co-chairs may choose to limit attendance to committee members only for all or a portion of the meetings.

The staffing committee will be co-chaired by one nursing staff member currently providing direct patient care and one management representative. The staff co-chair will be selected annually by vote of committee members. The management co-chair will be selected annually by vote of committee members. If at any point a co-chair is unable to fulfill the duties of the role, a new co-chair will be selected.

#### **Orientation of Members**

It is important for all voting committee members to be knowledgeable about factors that inform decision making regarding hospital operations and current laws related to hospital staffing. Newly selected staffing committee members will receive basic orientation related to hospital quality improvement strategy, organizational budgeting process, current applicable hospital staffing laws, committee structure and function, and member duties. Initial orientation is provided by committee co-chairs with ongoing education provided to all members as needed. Completion of new member orientation is a condition of committee membership.

Committee co-chairs will review orientation materials annually and make any necessary updates.

#### **Roles & Responsibilities**

Staffing committee co-chairs will serve for a period of one year. Co-chair duties include, but are not limited to:

- Schedule meetings to optimize the ability of all members to attend and ensure all members are notified of changes to meeting schedule
- Monitor attendance of members to ensure adequate quorum for each meeting and take action to address non-attendance as outlined in the committee charter
- Ensure adequate staffing coverage is available for members to attend meetings to meet quorum
- Develop agenda for each meeting with input from committee members
- Maintain complete and accurate committee documentation, including but not limited to meeting minutes, complaint review log, annual staffing plan, & staffing plan updates.
- Ensure timely submission of the staffing plan to DOH following committee & CEO approval
- Work with unit-based leadership to ensure that patient care unit annual staffing plans, shift-based staffing, and total clinical staffing are posted on each unit in a public area.
- Facilitate respectful professional discussions and moderate as needed.
- Organize staffing complaints to facilitate the best use of time during committee review
- Acknowledge receipt of staffing complaints and respond in writing to the staff member who submitted the complaint
- Notify staff member and manager when a complaint is scheduled to be reviewed by the committee and invite them to attend
- Ensure closed loop communication occurs following committee review of a staffing complaint
- Work with unit-based leadership to implement corrective action plans based on complaint review and committee decision
- Present annual staffing plan and any semi-annual adjustments to the CEO or review and approval
- Hold committee members accountable for expectations of professional conduct

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- Ensure that all committee members work collaboratively together in good faith to meet the collective needs of patients, staff, and the organization.

Staff committee members will serve for a period of one year.

Committee member responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Complete new member orientation and participate in on-going education as recommended by committee co-chairs
- Consistently attend committee meetings. Attendance will be monitored by co-chairs
- Notify committee co-chairs and arrange for a substitute representative when unable to attend.
- Notify committee co-chairs if meetings are scheduled during a scheduled shift so that coverage can be arranged for member to attend
- Actively participate in committee meetings, including reading required materials in advance of the meeting as assigned, coming prepared for meetings, and engaging in respectful dialogue as professional committee members
- Remain open minded and solution focused and earnestly engage in the collaborative/cooperative problem-solving process
- Model professional solution focused communication both in committee meetings and when discussing staffing concerns with peers
- Act as a committee ambassador to gather input from peers and share with committee to inform decisions and assist peers in understanding process for developing staffing plans and reviewing complaints
- Encourage peers to effectively communicate staffing concerns through the process established by the committee to best facilitates collaborative problem solving
- Communicate urgent staffing concerns that arise between meetings with unit-based leadership and committee co-chairs

#### **Meeting Schedule & Notification**

The staffing committee will meet monthly, or more often if needed, to achieve objectives of the committee as determined by committee members. Meeting dates and times will be set by the committee co-chairs with input from committee members. Committee members will be notified of meeting dates and times via email at least 30 days in advance of routine meetings.

Participation by committee members in meetings shall be during scheduled work time and compensated at the appropriate rate of pay. Members shall be relieved of all other work duties during meetings. Whenever possible, meetings will be scheduled as part of members' normal full-time equivalent hours. It is understood that meeting schedules may require members to attend on their scheduled day off. In this case, staff may be given equivalent time off during another scheduled shift or may be compensated at the appropriate rate of pay. Members are responsible for notifying the committee co-chairs if they are scheduled to work when a committee meeting is scheduled so that coverage can be arranged. Meetings may be in person and/or remote.

Staffing relief will be provided if necessary to ensure committee members are able to attend meetings. Members must notify the committee co-chairs by email if a meeting is scheduled during a previously scheduled shift and staffing relief will be needed.

In the event of an unforeseeable emergent circumstance lasting for 15 days or more, the hospital incident command will provide a report to the hospital staffing committee co-chairs within 30 days including an assessment

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of the staffing needs arising from the unforeseeable emergent circumstance and the hospital's plan to address the identified staffing needs. Upon receipt of this report the hospital staffing committee will convene to develop a contingency staffing plan.

#### **Quorum**

Quorum is the minimum acceptable level of individuals with an interest in the committee needed to make the proceedings of the meeting valid. Establishing a quorum ensures there is sufficient representation at meetings before changes can be proposed or adopted. Quorum for the staffing committee will be considered met as long as at least 4 of committee members are present. Quorum must be established before the committee takes a vote on staffing plan approval or revision. A Quorum is preferred for review of staffing complaints, but in order to ensure timely processing of complaints, committee co-chairs may elect to process complaints with less than 60% of members present.

Attendance is taken at the beginning of each committee meeting. Members who are unable to attend a meeting for any reason must notify the co-chairs in advance of the meeting to allow for adjustments to maintain the quorum. A substitute/delegate may be selected if approved by the committee co-chairs.

#### **Communication Strategy & Consensus**

The preferred communication strategy to ensure effective and efficient communication is: collaborative problem solving, defined as a process of civil discussion wherein two or more parties negotiate agreeably to have varying needs met by considering the perspective of all parties to seek a mutually agreeable solution.

Consensus, defined as agreement among the majority of voting members present when quorum is met, will be the primary decision-making model for approval of the annual staffing plan, changes to a staffing plan, classification of complaints following committee review, and other committee decisions as determined by the committee co-chairs. The following process will be utilized when a committee consensus vote is needed:

1. Interested parties will present relevant information.
2. Opportunity will be given for discussion, questions, & clarification.
3. Co-chairs will indicate that the committee will vote on the matter.
4. Members will submit their vote via paper ballots or by an electronic voting poll.

A consensus will be considered met with a vote of 50%+1 of voting committee members.

#### **Agenda**

Meeting agendas are developed and agreed upon by the committee co-chairs prior to each meeting. Members and non-member employees may request items to be added to the agenda either before or during the meeting. Non-employees may not add items to the agenda but may request a committee member to add an agenda item. Items added to the agenda during a meeting will be addressed as time allows and moved to the next meeting agenda if there is not adequate time.

Standing agenda for committee meetings is as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Attendance
3. Approval of documentation from previous meeting
4. Agenda review (opportunity for additions)

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5. Charter approval (annually)
6. Committee member education (annually and as needed)
7. Old business (Review of assignments made last meeting, unresolved discussions, & agenda items rolled over from previous meeting)
8. Budget review (semi-annually)
9. Quality report
10. HR Report
11. Staffing plan compliance report
12. Staffing plan(s) review/proposed unit staffing plan changes (if any, semi-annually)
13. Progress Reports (corrective action plans in progress)
14. Staffing complaint trend data
15. New staffing complaint review & classification
16. Assignments & Agenda items for next meeting
17. Adjournment

#### **Documentation & Retention**

Committee co-chairs will designate a scribe to take notes during each committee meeting. Documentation will be distributed to committee members for review prior to the next meeting and approved by co-chairs with input from members at the next committee meeting. Information excluded from meeting minutes are subject to public disclosure, such as confidential information or specific quality data from the meeting notes. Committee co-chairs can proofread notes for this information prior to committee approval.

Meeting documentation will include, but not be limited to:

- Attendance
- Approval of previous meeting documentation
- Summary of member education provided during the meeting
- The outcomes of any votes taken during the meeting
- Action items discussed during the meeting with member assigned
- Disposition and action taken on staffing complaints reviewed during each meeting will be recorded on complaint log.

Written documents containing confidential information should not be removed from the meeting or shared with individuals who are not members of the committee. All committee documentation, including meeting documentation and staffing complaint tracking logs will be retained for a minimum of three years.

#### **Development of Staffing Plans**

The staffing committee is responsible for the development and oversight of the staffing plan for provision of daily nurse staffing needs for the identified areas. The committee will review the effectiveness of each patient care unit nurse staffing plan semiannually. Department leaders should report to the staffing committee all relevant information to be considered in the review & approval of the patient care unit staffing plan.

Factors to be included in the development of staffing plans include, but at not limited to:

- Census, including total number of patients on the patient care unit each shift
- Activity such as patient discharges, admissions, & transfers
- Patient acuity level, intensity of care needs, and the type of care to be delivered on each shift

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- FTE mix of current staff, including full-time, part-time per diem, travel/contract, local agency, float pool, etc.
- Anticipated staff absences (vacation, planned leave, sabbatical)
- Skill mix of staff
- Level of experience and specialty certification or training of nursing and patient care staff providing care
- The need for specialized or intensive equipment
- Availability and ease of access of resources, equipment, and supplies
- The architecture and geography of the patient care unit, including but not limited to placement of patient rooms, treatment areas, nursing stations, medication preparation areas and equipment
- Staffing guidelines adopted or published by national nursing organizations, and other health professional organizations
- Availability of other personnel and patient care staff supporting nursing services on the unit, including support staff not assigned to a specific patient care unit. Ex: Respiratory therapy, Occupational Therapy, Environmental services.
- Measures to optimize available staff, such as the current staffing model, alternative models of care considered, workflow optimization, reduction of redundant documentation, use of technology, etc.
- Compliance with the terms of an applicable collective bargaining agreement, if any, and relevant state and federal laws, including those regarding meal and rest breaks and use of overtime and on-call shift.
- Semiannual review of the staffing plan against patient need
- Known evidence-based staffing information, including the quality indicators collected by the hospital
- Review, assessment, and response to staffing variations or complaints presented to the committee
- Hospital finances and resources as well as a defined budget cycle

The staffing committee will review relevant data as outlined in the table below for consideration of the effectiveness of unit-based staffing plans.

<b>Quality Metric</b>	<b>Review Frequency</b>
Staff satisfaction and culture survey trends	Annually
Staffing Plan Compliance reports	Monthly
Missed meal & rest break reports	Monthly
Overtime & mandatory on call reports	Monthly
Hospital & department specific budget reports	Semi-annually
Human Resources Report, including but not limited to, turnover & vacancy rates by discipline & patient care unit, new hire turnover rates during the first year of employment, exit interview trends*, hiring trends, & hospital workforce development plans. *Individual exit interview responses will not be shared with the committee due to potential staff confidentiality conflict. An HR representative will identify trends and provide a consolidated report to the committee.	Monthly
Hospital wide and department specific quality indicators, including but not limited to, patient complaints*, patient satisfaction survey responses*, and key quality indicators as identified by the committee.	Monthly

Validation of data:

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The Hospital Staffing Committee co-chairs will review staffing plan compliance and meal and rest break compliance reports quarterly to determine and document the validity of each report.

Upon review of all relevant data, the staffing committee will consider and vote on proposed staffing plan adjustments. A staffing plan will be considered and approved by the committee when a majority (50% +1) of the committee votes in favor of the plan. The committee approved staffing plan proposal will be forwarded to the hospital Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for review by July 1<sup>st</sup> annually for the following year and any time an adjustment is requested and approved by the committee.

Upon receiving a staffing plan proposal from the Hospital Staffing Committee, the CEO or designee will review the proposal and provide written feedback to the committee. The written feedback must include, but is not limited to the following:

- Elements of the proposed staffing plan the CEO requests to be changed
- Elements that could cause concern regarding financial feasibility, temporary or permanent closure of units, or patient care risk
- A status report on implementation of the staffing plan including nurse sensitive quality indicators, patient surveys, recruitment/retention efforts, and success over past six months in filling open positions for employees covered by the staffing plan.

The committee will review and consider any feedback from the CEO, revise the staffing plan if applicable, and approve the new draft staffing plan by majority vote (50% +1) before submitting the revised staffing plan to the CEO for approval. If the revised staffing plan proposal is not accepted by the CEO and adopted upon second review, the CEO will document rationale for this decision. If the committee is unable to agree on a staffing plan proposal by majority vote or the CEO does not accept and adopt the proposed staffing plan, the staffing plan in effect January 1, 2023, or the most recent staffing plan approved by majority committee vote and adopted by the hospital will remain in effect until a new proposal can be agreed upon. The CEO's written report will be retained with staffing committee documentation as outlined in the section of the document titled "Documentation and Retention".

#### **Complaint Review Process**

The following is the expected process for addressing staffing concerns.

Step 1: Real time communication- Staffing concerns should be discussed with the immediate supervisor and whenever possible resolved in real time.

Step 2: Immediate Supervisor Review – Staffing concerns are to be discussed with the Charge Nurse on duty responsible for staffing assignments during the shift. The staff member and Charge Nurse work together to evaluate the immediate clinical situation, evaluate patient and staff conditions, and explore potential solutions. When a staffing variance from the staffing plan is identified or the clinical circumstances warrant additional staff to accommodate patient care needs, the Charge Nurse will determine the appropriate reasonable efforts to resolve the situation using available resources.

Reasonable effort means that the employer exhausts and documents all of the following but is unable to obtain staffing coverage:

- Seeks individuals to work additional time from all available qualified staff who are working;
- Contacts qualified employees who have made themselves available to work additional time;



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- Seeks the use of per diem staff; and
- Seeks personnel from a contracted temporary agency.

When the Charge Nurse has exhausted all available resources and determines that there is immediate risk to patient and/or staff safety, the Charge Nurse will contact the next level supervisor as outlined in the hospital chain of command policy for assistance in resolving the concern.

If the concern cannot be resolved after escalating to senior leadership or the Charge Nurse determines that no immediate risk to patient and/or staff safety exists, the Charge Nurse will document the following to aid in ongoing review of the concern:

- Precipitating circumstances – such as an unforeseen emergent circumstance as defined below, unusually high number of sick calls or unexpected influx of patients,
- All efforts to obtain additional staff,
- Other measures taken to ensure patient & staff safety, and
- Rationale for shift-based staffing adjustments based on immediate circumstances

If the staffing concern is a result of unforeseen emergent circumstances the Charge Nurse should document those circumstances for the staffing committee to review. Unforeseen emergent circumstances are defined as:

- “Any unforeseen declared national, state, or municipal emergency;
- When a hospital disaster plan is activated;
- Any unforeseen disaster or other catastrophic event that substantially affects or increases the need for health care services;
- When a hospital is diverting patients to another hospital or hospitals for treatment”

#### Step 3 – Staffing Concern/Complaint Report

When a staff member has discussed their staffing concern with the Charge Nurse and is not satisfied with the outcome or solution, the staff member should initiate a Staffing Concern/Compliant Report.

The purpose of reporting a staffing concern is to escalate unresolved concerns to the manager and Hospital Staffing Committee for review. Every effort should be made to complete the report prior to the end of the shift in which the concern occurred. Timely communication helps to facilitate prompt review and response to the concern. The staffing committee aims to address all concerns within 90 days of the committee co-chairs receiving the report. Delayed reporting may cause a delay in this process.

If a concern is resolved during the shift by activating the standard chain of command, a Staffing Concerns/Complaint report may or may not be completed at the discretion of the staff member. Concerns resolved during the shift are classified as resolved and closed upon staffing committee review. A staffing concern report may be submitted to the committee if there is a recurring pattern, even if the immediate concern is resolved. Multiple reports submitted for the same occurrence will be reviewed for context and to ensure all information is considered but will be counted as a single occurrence for documentation purposes.

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Step 4 – Routing of staffing concern reports- The Charge Nurse, staffing committee co-chairs, and Nurse Manager should be notified immediately that a report has been initiated via email.

Incomplete reports that are missing pertinent information may delay the review process. Efforts to obtain necessary information will include, but not be limited to contacting the staff member who submitted the report if known, contacting the Charge Nurse on the shift in which the concern occurred, and/or contacting other staff members working the shift in which the concern occurred. A report may be dismissed by the committee due to insufficient information to investigate the concern.

The hospital staffing committee will review all written reports submitted to the committee regardless of the format used to submit the report. However, the use of a reporting method other than the expected process outlined above may cause a delay in committee co-chairs receiving the report. Committee co-chairs will log the date each report is received and will proceed with the standard review process.

Step 5 – Department/Unit Level Review & Action Plan – Upon receiving a staffing concern/complaint report, the Nurse Manager will initiate a department level review. Within 7 business days of receiving a concern, the Nurse Manager will notify the staff member in writing that their concern has been received and will be reviewed by the Nurse Manager and Staffing Committee. The Nurse Manager will identify trends and factors that contribute to staffing variances, facilitate problem solving at the department level, and implement and evaluate corrective interventions, as appropriate. Corrective actions may include, but are not limited to, process improvement to optimize staffing, workflow optimization, alternative models of care, proposing adjustments to the staffing plan, staff education, and counseling of individual staff regarding performance or attendance issues. The Nurse Manager will evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions with input from staff and make a recommendation to the Hospital Staffing Committee regarding classification and future corrective actions.

Step 6 – Present to Hospital Staffing Committee- Prior to a concern being presented to HSC for review, the committee co-chairs will notify the staff member who submitted the concern that their concern is scheduled for HSC review and arrange for the staff member to attend the meeting if the staff member wishes to do so. If a staff member is unable to attend the scheduled meeting but still wants to present their concern to HSC directly, they may request that HSC postpone review of their concern until the next scheduled meeting. If postponement will exceed the 90-day review period, HSC members will vote on whether to review the concern or extend the review period to allow the staff member to present their concern. HSC co-chairs will document any request to postpone review and the committee decision on the complaint tracking log.

Ideally the staff member and Nurse Manager will present the concern, the corrective action plan, and further recommendations to HSC together. If the staff member declines to attend the meeting, the Nurse Manager will present their recommendations to the committee.

A **SBAR** format should be used to facilitate clear communication.

Situation – Explain the staffing concern or variation

Background – Explain contributing factors, and any identified root cause(s).

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Action & Assessment – Corrective action taken at the department level & evaluation of effectiveness of attempted solutions.

Recommendation – Next steps for HSC. Suggest other potential solutions and how the concern should be classified by HSC.

Step 7 – Staffing Committee Classification & Collaboration – After receiving the department report, HSC will determine how to classify each staffing concern/complaint and whether additional action is needed to resolve the concern. The following standard definitions will be used to classify each concern:

#### **Dismissed –**

- Not enough information/detail was provided to investigate
- The evidence presented to the nurse staffing committee does not support the staffing complaint
- The hospital followed the nurse staffing plan

#### **Dismissed with Acknowledgement –**

- HSC acknowledges that there was a variation from the staffing plan which could not be resolved due to the following circumstances:
  - The hospital has documented that it has made reasonable efforts to obtain staffing but has been unable to do so. See definition of reasonable efforts.
  - The incident causing the complaint occurred during an unforeseeable emergent circumstance.
  - Other circumstances to be specified by HSC.

#### **Resolved –**

- HSC agrees that the complaint has been resolved and must designate a resolution level.
  - Level 1 – Resolved by immediate supervisor during shift in which concern occurred
  - Level 2 – Resolved at department/unit level with final review by HSC
  - Level 3 – Resolved after HSC action

#### **In progress –**

- A potential solution or corrective action plan has been identified and initiated.
- Intermediate or contingent designation. May not be the final disposition of a complaint.
- HSC must follow up on the concern to evaluate the effectiveness of the corrective action plan and determine the final disposition of the concern.

#### **Escalated –**

- HSC needs additional assistance and/or resources from senior leadership to address the concern.
- Intermediate or contingent designation. May not be the final disposition of a complaint.
- HSC will revisit this concern for further discussion until it can be resolved.

#### **Unresolved –**

- HSC agrees that a complaint is not resolved or is unable to reach consensus on resolution.

If a problem is not classified as dismissed or resolved when presented to the committee, the committee will identify potential solutions and develop an action plan. The committee will attempt to resolve concerns within 90

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days of HSC co-chairs receiving a concern report. The HSC may choose to extend the review period longer than 90 days with approval from the majority (50%+1) of the committee. Any decision to extend the review period will be recorded by the committee co-chairs on the complaint tracking log.

Step 8 – Implementation or Escalation – During this step solution(s) identified by the committee are implemented as agreed upon in Step 7. If a solution could not be identified or the committee recognizes that additional resources are needed to implement the plan, the problem will be escalated to senior leadership for assistance. The committee may repeat Step 7 with senior leadership and return to Step 8 when a solution has been identified.

Step 9 – Evaluation – After a time period agreed upon by committee members, the HSC will review and evaluate the effectiveness of the corrective action plan. The committee will reclassify the concern at this time and record the new classification in the complaint tracking log. If the concern is not adequately resolved, the committee may choose to repeat Steps 6 through 9 as many times as necessary to resolve the problem. If this process exceeds 90 days from the date the report was received, the committee will vote on whether to extend the review period.

Step 10 – Documentation – **No protected health information (PHI) should be included in any HSC documentation.**

The following information for each staffing concern/complaint report is logged on the Staffing Concern Tracker:

- Date concern received by the committee
- Information from the immediate supervisor and/or department manager review including:
  - Precipitating circumstances including unforeseen emergent circumstances if applicable
  - All efforts to obtain staff, including exhausting defined reasonable efforts
  - Other measures taken to ensure patient & staff safety
  - Rationale for shift-based staffing adjustments based on immediate circumstances.
- Initial, contingent, & final disposition
- Corrective action taken, if necessary
- Date resolved (within 90 days or receipt or longer with majority approval)
- Attendance by employee involved in complaint and labor representative if requested by the employee
- Closed loop written communication to the complainant stating the outcome of the complaint.

Step 11 – Closed Loop Communication – The outcome of each complaint review will be communicated to the staff member who initiated the concern/complaint report in writing via email.