



HOW - TO GUIDE

# 5 ways to deliver better patient outcomes with nurse scheduling

HEALTHCARE

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Nurses routinely face many issues in the workplace that can lead to stress, overwork, and burnout. And with clear evidence that [nurse staffing contributes to the successful delivery of optimal patient care](#), as well as greater satisfaction for patients, families, and staff, it's imperative that nurses are happy and working to the best of their ability. Workforce scheduling has become an even bigger priority and a huge opportunity to enhance satisfaction for both patients and nurses.

**Try these five workforce scheduling methods to drive better staff satisfaction and patient care.**

## 1. Patient-centered staffing

Leaders in the industry know that [the move from volume to value-based reimbursement demands a more modern approach to staffing and scheduling](#). The American Nursing Association recommends that patient complexity plus social determinants of health are important factors to consider in understanding your clinical staffing. Scheduling should be based on the clinical reality of patients being treated, rather than census. Clinically integrating your Electronic Medical Records (EMR) and your workforce management system is a mission-critical connection to ensure patient safety and quality, as well as staff satisfaction, without any additional documentation or effort.

## 2. Improve nurse self-scheduling

When it's time to schedule nurses, workforce leaders can opt to place staff into shifts or give nurses the opportunity to self-schedule. Self-scheduling allows nurses to select available shifts and improves satisfaction—all while supporting better patient outcomes. The organization should determine the rules for self-scheduling, while staff actively participates in constructing work schedules. Work toward self-scheduling that minimizes staffing office efforts, while maximizing employee satisfaction. Leaders will gain real-time feedback on areas like compliance and schedule rule violations.

## 3. Decisions based on real-time data

Make sure central staffing employees and charge nurses have access to schedule management and execution information that gives them a bird's eye view of nursing schedules. Key performance indicators provide up-to-date information on overall schedule statistics and allow rapid adjustment to schedules when over- and under-coverage situations occur. When nurses plan longer term absences or vacations, managers can more easily cover shifts by using systematic ranking of staff members in the float pool and offer schedule vacancies based on those rankings—something especially useful in hospitals with nurses' unions.

## 4. Apply a team-based model in all settings

Not surprisingly, studies show that when staffing resources don't meet patient care demands, nurses experience intense stress. Over time, this stress contributes to burnout, compassion fatigue, and turnover. Forming a clinical care team is about much more than making the numbers. Quality care comes from collaboration, and a team that provides a balance of expertise, energy, and skill mix. Workforce and talent management software gives managers the ability to build and oversee teams, as well as provide ways for team members to communicate, collaborate, and have visibility into key information.

## 5. Manage rotation schedules

To handle the variables of nursing rotations, healthcare organizations need scheduling capabilities that predefine patterns of day, evening, and night shifts, build in appropriate number of rest days for your staff, and evenly distribute night shifts across the employee population. Teams also need to address nursing rotations with a shift-based workload model featuring templates that define a baseline workload for each budgeting and staffing mix, and that include effective dates for seasonal adjustments to baseline workload. Additionally, master rotation schedules allowing for long-term planning and management based on pattern-based cyclical schedules, such as maternity leaves or vacations, can also prove helpful.

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