**TL8 : The Various Methods by which the CNO is visible and accesses direct-care nurses.**

The visibility, accessibility, and communication of Riverside’s COO/CNO and Vice President of Nursing have been, and remains an integral component of the Riverside Professional Nursing Practice Model. Through these distinct features, Riverside staff have open access to both our COO/CNO, Dave Duda, and the Vice President of Nursing, Deena Layton. Riverside has implemented unique programs to ensure all senior management/executive positions have the opportunity to interact with Riverside staff members, where ideas are exchanged, stories are shared, and personal relationships are developed.

**Open Door Policy**

Given Dave’s longevity in the VP of Nursing/CNO role, his Open Door policy and practice of rounding to units, staff feel very comfortable accessing him and his Nursing VPs, Deena and Allen. Dave’s assistant, Margo, knows she may schedule staff to see Dave at any time to approach him on any topic.

**Dinner with Dave, Deena and Allen**

One such practice is the "Dinner with Dave" and "Dinner with Deena and Allen" story. This initiative sends an open invite to employees to dine with Dave Duda, Deena Layton and/or Allen Kelly to share any questions, concerns, or simply socialize over a dinner specially prepared for the direct care nursing staff. Attendees are then sent thank you letters personally signed by Dave, Deena, or Allen, with follow-up on concerns or questions they may have presented.

The history of this type of interpersonal communication dates back to the year 2000. Midnight meals would be provided with administration such as CEO/President, Vice Presidents/COO/CNO, who would stand in as cashiers to meet the employees as they proceeded through the line or even help serve the meal. The "midnight meals" were replaced in 2007 with "Dinner with Dave", the then Vice President of Nursing (CNO role) to allow more quality time with a group of individuals where they were encouraged to present ideas, pose questions, and give feedback. As Riverside’s management evolved and succession planning began for Dave as CNO, Deena Layton was appointed Vice President of Nursing and Allen Kelly, VP of Procedural Services, the tradition continued, extending to Dinners with Deena and Allen (Dinner with Dave and Deena and Allen 4/29/09 shown to the right).
One Year Celebration for Preceptors and New Hires

Since 2003, Riverside has conducted a one-year and two-year celebration post-hire for new grad and experienced nurses and their preceptor (or a staff member selected by the new nurse who has been helpful to the new nurse’s development). The luncheon celebration is coordinated by LeAnn McCormick, RN and Riverside Onboarding Coordinator and led by Dave Duda, COO/CNO with Deena and Allen in attendance. The focus on the luncheon is to evaluate what worked well in orientation and is helping retain them at Riverside along with an open dialogue on any concerns they have as new nurses—including any concerns that might cause them to think about leaving Riverside.

One 5Tele Nurse and Celebration attendee stated following the celebration, “It really made me feel like what I thought mattered and gave me a real sense of ownership in what I do”.

This re-recruitment celebration has been so helpful that the 5Tele unit in 2007, began meeting with newly hired nurses at three and six month anniversaries post-hire. The meetings took place in a local restaurant, “Blues Café”, where the manager, team leaders, and new nurses met for breakfast to discuss the transition from student nurse to staff nurse. In an open forum, ideas were discussed for future improvement of the orientation process and strengths were identified and built upon. Questions and concerns were immediately addressed with timely feedback presented on a thank you sent out by nursing leadership following the breakfast gathering.

Rounding to Units

As far back as 1995 when Dave first transitioned to the VP of Patient Care Services (the then-equivalent of CNO), he would round on the units regularly and was willing to pull trash, answer call lights, and even sat in the nurse’s station answering phones to assist. His visibility, hands-on approach, and approachability set the tone for all senior executives because by being there, he showed he cared and it helped him stay abreast of what was happening on the units. Even when he couldn’t be there, Dave was available by pager or would just call in on nights or weekends or round at night to check on the direct care nurses and see how things were going. Dave set the bar high for all the senior executive team through his approach and that approach continues today and has been extended to other leaders beyond Dave and is part of an expectation for all senior management (to round on direct care nurses).

Starting in 2009 and 2010, Dave, Allen and Deena weekly round on the nursing units, often taking Phil Kambic, CEO, with them to meet staff and increase visibility to the direct care nurses. In April of 2009, Deena Layton, Vice President of Nursing and Debra Denham, house supervisor, took the time to come on Easter Sunday to pass out candy and thank staff for the care they provide patients at Riverside. As during typical leader rounds at Riverside, during these holiday rounds, Deena and Deb conversed with the staff about their concerns and the direction that Riverside is taking, hearing and responding to comments and suggestions of the present staff members.
**State of Riverside**

The State of Riverside is an open forum for all employees across our health system to hear how Riverside is performing, what is coming next for our organization and how they can be part of it. Most of all, the meetings provide for a question and answer time with the entire senior executive team. Of all the senior executive team, Dave is the most requested presenter by departments (including non-nursing areas) to come to their meeting due to his comfortable approach and his willingness to share information. Staff feel safe to ask him anything—and the only downside is he receives so many questions, his presentations tend to run over their scheduled end time.

**Visibility and Accessibility of our COO/CNO and Nursing VPs Drive Employee Engagement at Riverside**

When we look at our 2009 Organizationwide Employee Opinion Survey results for direct care nurses only, the perception of nursing executive visibility improved slightly over our 2007 results as shown below and is approaching Top 100® Great Place to Work Benchmark results. Information from this survey has been distributed to staff that are collaborating with management in developing measurable goals for each area.

Although these results are not yet where we want them to be, the 2009 results are particularly positive given that 2009 results nationally according to the Great Places to Work Institute (and other employee survey organizations) fell to their lowest levels in over a decade during 2009—attributed to the recession. In fact, from 2007 to 2009, Great Places to Work shared they saw, on average a 9% to 13% decrease per question item on their survey instrument from 2008—which we did not experience.

More importantly, these survey results show our direct care nurses feel connected and informed about the future of Riverside—particularly important as this survey was conducted during an economic recession where we saw our own census down for the first time since the recession had begun nationally. These results help our COO/CNO and other senior leaders feel that continuing to increase the frequency of discussion about health care reform and the recession has been the right approach to help our direct care nurses feel less anxious about the massive changes our region and nation are experiencing.

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<th>Riverside 2007 Unit/DEPT 2007</th>
<th>Riverside 2009 ORG 2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Management is approachable, easy to talk with.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management has a clear view of where the organization is going and how to get there.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
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*Note: The percentages displayed reflect only positive perceptions on the scale of ‘almost always true’ or ‘always true’. This data shows that over 2/3 of employees find it nearly always true that management is approachable and easy to talk with.*
As one nursing staff member shared on our 2009 Employee Opinion Survey:

“Our leadership at RHC knows what to do and when to do it. They are bright, courageous, intuitive, and decisive. I love working here and I love everyone here. Riverside is a great place to work because of the great leadership that we have. Deena Layton and Dave Duda do a wonderful job. We are lucky and should be thankful for the leadership we have everyday. “

Amanda Bertsch R.N. wrote the following letter regarding her experience as a new nurse at Riverside that demonstrates accessibility to our COO and nursing executives:

"Early in my career at Riverside, I was introduced to Deena Layton Vice President of Nursing. Deena often visited the units and was always very personable. She never hesitated to discuss continuing education and opportunities in our profession. In February, I was given the honor of having dinner with Dave, Deena and Allen Kelly. We discussed many topics including our current positions at Riverside, future possibilities for Riverside, and the future of our profession as a whole. I was encouraged to pursue my Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing. I am proud to be working for a hospital that encourages and supports professional development. The faces at Riverside continue to guide and strengthen me through my professional journey."

**Focus Groups**

Our nursing executive team will also hold focus groups with staff periodically to garner feedback. For example, in the Fall 2009, Sandi Viall, Director of Nursing, and Deena met with the 5ICU nursing staff. Discussions focused on their challenges to providing patient care. Deena facilitated the discussion to explore options with them to improve processes on their unit. For example, orientation to open heart patients changed based on this meeting.

**Celebrating Nurses**

Dave also is visible as are Deena and Allen, participating and interacting (and serving) with direct care nurses in a variety of celebration and thank you settings during the course of each year ranging from holiday, to Nurses’ Week and Health Care week celebrations, to gift distributions to our employees when we earn major awards such as the Top 100 or Everest award.

For example, during the Annual Employee Service Awards Dinner conducted in May each year to celebrate employees with 10 or more years of service, Dave, Deena, and Allen serve wine to our employees and their guest at the meal. During healthcare week, Dave, Deena and Allen informally scoop ice cream to serve employees during make your sundae on all shifts. During the annual holiday buffet, Deena, Dave and Allen serve food to our direct care staff on all shifts—thankning
them for the difference they make. In 2009, when Riverside was named a Top 100 Hospital for the second year in a row, Riverside’s Celebration Team created gift distribution times on all shifts including weekends, and Dave, Deena and Allen were each there to help distribute the gifts and informally thank our employees one to one.

**Visibility, Accessibility, and Open Door Communication is Not New at Riverside**

For over a decade, Dave Duda, COO/CNO and now Deena Layton and Allen Kelly, his Nursing VPs, have demonstrated transformational leadership—incorporating accessibility, visibility, and an open, nonthreatening exchange of information at the heart of their leadership style.

Whether it’s the State of Riverside townhall meetings, Dinner with Dave or celebrations with new nurses one year and later post-hire, focus groups, leader rounding to nursing units, calls to check in during offhours/night to hear how direct are nurses are doing, or an open door policy, our COO/CNO and VPs of Nursing are visible and accessible to direct care nurses. And, informally interacting with our direct care nurses by scooping their ice cream sundae, serving wine at a dinner in the employees’ honor, or distributing gifts in honor of organizational quality serves to help direct care nurses find our CNO and his Nursing VPs visible, accessible, and nonthreatening.

Like other organizations, our nursing executives developed this style in order to learn more about our direct care nurses and their ideas and opinions in the operation of Riverside—and to foster a practice environment where nurses would feel treated as professionals and supported in their nursing practice to be their personal best.

This culture of nursing practice remains strong at Riverside as evidenced by the high quality nursing care provided to patients, much of which is based on evidence-based practices; researched and developed by staff members. Ideals, beliefs, and the strong ethical attributes of Riverside staff are the cornerstone of our Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice Model – developed by our nursing leaders and our direct care staff. Leadership encourages autonomy and empowerment of staff members, recognizing these characteristics as beneficial to not only the environment in which nurses’ work, but in the care they provide to patients on a daily basis.

Leaders at Riverside constantly looking towards the future needs of the community and staff—based on extant data and direct care nurses’ input. And—without accessibility, visibility, and open communication, many nurses would feel uncomfortable or would not give their input. We believe our low nursing turnover and high direct care nurse satisfaction is due to the consistent leadership style of Dave Duda and now Deena and Allen. As a result, Riverside has no shortage of direct care nurses’ ideas to help lead us through health care reform and to continuing to live our mission.