

# PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE STANDARDS AND SCHWARTZ ROUNDS®

The Schwartz Rounds program aligns with the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Pathway to Excellence program’s six essential standards by supporting shared decision-making, demonstrating leadership commitment, promoting safety and quality improvement, enhancing staff well-being, and supporting professional development through structured, reflective discussions about the emotional aspects of healthcare. Adoption of the program demonstrates the following standards: EOP 1.1, 1.5, 1.8, 2.1, 2.6, 2.9, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.8, 5.11, 6.2, 6.7, and 6.8.

Standard	Elements Of Performance (EOP)	How Schwartz Rounds may demonstrate this EOP	Checklist
<b>1. Shared Decision-Making</b>	EOP 1.1: Describe how the organization promotes a culture of interprofessional shared decision-making.	The Schwartz Rounds program is implemented by an interprofessional planning committee who decide together on the topics or cases to be discussed in the sessions. As members of the Schwartz Rounds Planning Committee, nurses help shape the plans for the Schwartz Rounds program and make ongoing improvements based on post-session feedback from attendees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has your CNO been involved in implementing and/or supporting the Schwartz Rounds program in your organization?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are direct care nurses and/or nurse managers represented on your Schwartz Rounds Planning Committee?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are nurses encouraged to attend Schwartz Rounds sessions? Is coverage provided for them to attend?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there communication or overlap among your Schwartz Rounds Planning Committee and/or your organization’s ethics committee if these exist at your organization?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How does your organization use Schwartz Rounds session feedback to help inform nurses’ and other healthcare workers’ well-being, and the outcomes of well-being initiatives?</li> </ul>
	EOP 1.5: Describe the interprofessional process that addresses how ethical concerns are managed in the organization.	Ethical concerns and topics, including those raised during ethics committee discussions, may be discussed at Schwartz Rounds sessions and topics.	
	EOP 1.8: Describe how direct-care nurses use a shared decision-making structure to plan and evaluate well-being initiatives.	The post-session feedback form explicitly asks whether participants agree or disagree with the statement: “Being able to attend Schwartz Rounds makes me feel like my organization cares about me.”	

## 2. Leadership

EOP 2.1: Describe the strategy or strategies that your organization has identified to sustain a positive practice environment regardless of leadership or organizational change.

EOP 2.6: Describe the process of how feedback from peers or direct report staff is incorporated into the performance evaluations of nurse managers.

EOP 2.9: For planned or unplanned changes that impact the organization, describe the strategies that the nursing leadership team uses to facilitate direct-care nurses' continued involvement in the shared decision-making structure.

Extensive published research has shown that the Schwartz Rounds program contributes to positive learning and work environments, in part by validating and normalizing emotional reactions to challenging situations and by creating a trustworthy space for reflection, a sense of connection, and a community of practice. The Schwartz Rounds program establishes positive relational norms, increased willingness to be vulnerable, and tolerance for sharing one's emotions and experiences.

Suggestions for process improvements and policy changes that arise during Schwartz Rounds sessions may later be implemented.

Conversations in Schwartz Rounds sessions about emotional reactions to difficult changes can help with change management.

- Do your nursing leaders attend, speak, and model empathy and compassion during Schwartz Rounds sessions?
- Do your direct-care nurses participate in Unit-Based Schwartz Rounds? How does their participation affect their perceptions of work climate and/or unit environment?
- How do discussions during Unit-Based Schwartz Rounds inform huddles, nurse and team meetings, and meetings with nurse managers about work climate and unit environment?
- How do direct-care nurse participants in Schwartz Rounds share suggestions for process or policy changes that arise for discussion during sessions?

### 3. Safety

EOP 3.1: Describe the process your organization uses to involve direct-care nurses in reporting, event analysis and in identifying trends of patient-related safety events.

EOP 3.2: Describe how direct-care nurses are involved in reporting and improvement strategies to prevent nurse-related safety events from reoccurring.

EOP 3.3: Describe how your organization promotes psychological safety and physical safety through a culture free from workplace violence among the healthcare team members. Describe the methods to track and address trends in nurse workplace violence.

EOP 3.11: Describe how the organization creates a culture where staff can feel safe to report discriminatory behaviors, reported concerns are addressed, and follow-up is provided to the staff who reported the concern.

Research has shown that participants are more likely to be comfortable sharing their perspectives, thoughts, and emotions after participating in Schwartz Rounds sessions. Participants report that the program contributes to reduced perceptions of hierarchy among healthcare workers. This enhances healthcare workers' psychological safety, which ultimately leads to better patient safety. The Schwartz Rounds program was included in recommendations for promoting psychological safety by [AHRQ's Patient Safety Network Annual Review](#).

- Are direct-care nurses involved in planning and participating in Schwartz Rounds sessions in which they can reflect on the impact of safety events?
- Are direct-care nurses involved in planning and participating in Schwartz Rounds discussions of the psychological and emotional impact of workplace violence?

#### 4. Quality

EOP 4.1: Describe how your organization engages direct-care nurses to understand how their role and actions contribute to achieving the mission, vision, values, and/or goals of your organization.

EOP 4.2: Describe how your organization promotes a culture of person- & family-centered care.

EOP 4.3: Describe educational opportunities regarding the application of evidence-based practice provided by your organization for direct-care nurses and nurse managers. Describe how nurse managers promote a culture where direct-care nurses can apply evidence-based practice.

EOP 4.5: Describe how your organization fosters interprofessional collaboration to improve quality outcomes.

Compassion is ubiquitous in many healthcare organizations' descriptions of their mission, values and goals. The Schwartz Rounds is an evidence-based program that has been shown to enhance the [experiences of empathy and compassion of the healthcare team](#) while also [enhancing the patient experience](#).

Schwartz Rounds sessions are one of the few programs that includes everyone who provides care in healthcare facilities. Evidence shows that the program significantly improves appreciation of team members' roles and contributions, and enhances communication and teamwork.

- Are nurses engaged in describing how the organization's mission, vision, values and goals align with the goals and outcomes of the Schwartz Rounds program?
- Are nurse leaders aware of the evidence base supporting the impact of the Schwartz Rounds program on person- and family-centered patient care, teamwork, and workforce well-being? How do they communicate this?

## 5. Well-being

EOP 5.1: Describe the opportunities provided by your organization to raise awareness of mental health issues prevalent among nurses, the available mental health services, and the evidence-based strategies to enhance mental well-being during work hours.

EOP 5.2: Describe how your organization assesses the health and mental wellness of employees.

EOP 5.8: Describe how your organization creates a culture where nurses feel safe to self-report medical errors in the workplace.

EOP 5.11: Describe your organization's strategies to address the healthcare provider team's compassion fatigue.

Research has shown that the Schwartz Rounds program significantly improves levels of [psychological distress](#) and decreases levels of [moral distress](#) among attendees.

- Do nurses, nurse leaders and managers advocate for implementing the Schwartz Rounds as an evidence-based program that reduces psychological and moral distress?
- Are Schwartz Rounds session evaluations and comments included in evaluating and improving well-being initiatives?
- Is attendance at Schwartz Rounds included in well-being programming and in the assessment of the efficacy of well-being initiatives?

<b>6. Professional Development</b>	EOP 6.2: Describe the strategies (other than orientation) that your organization has for newly graduated nurses and newly hired experienced nurses to transition to practice.	Schwartz Rounds sessions have been conducted for newly graduated nurses to help with the emotional and psychological impact of transitioning into clinical practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have Schwartz Rounds sessions been conducted for newly graduated nurses to address the impact of transitioning to practice?  <input type="checkbox"/> Are team members supported to attend Schwartz Rounds sessions individually or together in organization-wide or Unit-Based Schwartz Rounds?  <input type="checkbox"/> Do nurse leaders and managers utilize the program to intentionally model reflective practice and the qualities they wish to see in their nurses, including compassion, person-centeredness and non-judgmental acceptance of people?
	EOP 6.7: List the educational sessions provided within the required 36-month time frame that address how to engage in respectful communication among employees.	Respectful communication among co-workers is an important documented outcome of the program, especially when team members attend together.	
	EOP 6.8: Describe how your organization fosters the growth of direct-care nurses as emerging nurse leaders.	<p>Schwartz Rounds sessions provide a safe space for direct-care nurses to observe nurse leaders and nurse managers modeling empathy, compassion, person-centeredness, and non-judgmental acceptance of people.</p> <p>The program also fosters the importance of reflective practice, an essential skill for emerging leaders.</p>	