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Policies and Procedures – Creating an Effective District Wide System Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Providing access to an up-to-date, comprehensive and user-friendly policy and procedure system can be a challenge for any organization. Policies and procedures support standards of practice, enable informed decision-making, prescribe limits, assign responsibilities/accountabilities and guide evidenced-based practice. An effective policy and procedure manual system, whether hard-copy or electronic, contributes to improvements in care delivery, patient, employee and visitor safety, and positive outcomes of care.

The Capital District Health Authority is comprised of 11 facilities that are spread over a geographically wide area and provides a range of services and levels of care in both rural and urban settings. In 2001, this newly formed district embarked on a journey to integrate and streamline policies, procedures, and guidelines across sites, programs and disciplines. An exploration began to look at how we would effectively address the needs of our diverse users and develop a system that is manageable, accessible and reflective of the diverse practice settings.

This presentation will illuminate our journey of developing the "system" of manuals and the on-going work taking place to move towards an integrated, on-line accessible system. It will showcase work undertaken to search for a format reflective of a mix of policy, procedure and guidelines within an interdisciplinary team model. As well, it will speak to some examples of strategies developed and lessons learned such as: on-line search tools utilized and the resources and skills that are required to move us closer to the vision of a completely on-line system in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sylvia graduated in 1975 with a Bachelor of Nursing Degree from Dalhousie University and in 2001 with a Masters of Business Administration from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She is currently employed with Capital Health in Halifax where she has worked both as a staff nurse and a health services manager. Presently, she is the Policy Coordinator for the district, responsible for the integration of policies and procedures across sites and disciplines. Sylvia has also been a member of the Nova Scotia Nursing Informatics Group (NSNIG) for a number of years and currently holds the position of Treasurer.