

The Work Environment Assessment (WEA) Toolkit



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The Individual Workload Perception Scale-Revised (IWPS-R)

The Work Environment Assessment (WEA) uses the Individual Workload Perception Scale-Revised (IWPS-R) to measure nurses' views of their workload and organizational support. These results allow hospitals and health systems to focus on the areas with opportunities for the greatest improvement, and to use the IWPS-R to test the results of these targeted interventions.

Maslow's theory of human motivation hypothesized that people are first motivated by physiological needs. These basic, lower level needs must be met before people can be concerned with their higher level needs.¹ His theory is used to describe the process by which a person moves through the hierarchy of needs, progressing successively from lower tiered needs to upper tiered needs. Until lower level needs are met, upper levels needs are of little importance.

The IWPS-R uses this theory to assess the work environment of nurses according to the different levels of needs. For example, if the basic physiological needs of lunch breaks and adequate sleep between shifts are not met, nurses will be unable to fulfill higher level needs, such as workgroup cohesion, career development, or becoming a strategic planner within the shared governance of the health care organization.²

The IWPS-R measures lower level needs in order for the organization to address the basic needs of the nursing staff. Without adequately addressing shortfalls in those areas, it would be difficult for management to implement programs aimed at higher level needs.

1. Maslow, A.H. *Motivation and personality (3rd Edition)*. 1987, New York, NY: Harper & Row.

2. Cox, K.S. *Comparing lower level work environment needs with higher level work environment needs in an inpatient registered nurse sample. (Doctoral dissertation 2002)*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services.

There are six subscales within the IWPS-R:

- Manager Support (MS): the extent to which nurses perceive that their supervisors are helpful and concerned about their needs
- Peer Support (PS): the relationships that the nurses have with each other
- Unit Support (US): the extent to which the nurses feel they have access to the supplies, materials, resources, and services they need to do their jobs
- Workload (WL): the extent to which pressure and urgency dominate the work environment
- Intent to Stay (ITS): a predictive subscale that measures the likelihood that nurses will stay in their current job for the next year
- Nurse Satisfaction (NS): the overall job satisfaction, derived by averaging of all the questions in the IWPS-R

Scores in each of these subscales allow hospitals to tailor interventions to where they are most needed.

The IWPS-R uses two measurement instruments. The first is the Demographic Information Form, designed to correlate IWPS-R responses with demographic variables, including generation, shift, academic degree, age, and others. The second instrument is the survey itself, the IWPS-R. When it was initially tested, it was a 5 point Likert-type scale with 46 items. Based on the continuing validation of the instrument, revisions have been done on the survey. The IWPS-R is now a 29 item survey.

The IWPS-R Survey

INDIVIDUAL WORKLOAD PERCEPTION SCALE - REVISED

**THINK ABOUT YOUR TYPICAL DAILY WORKLOAD OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS AND
ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

<i>Scale:</i>						
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Unsure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree						
1.	If the nurse manager is off duty the unit is encouraged to contact her/him when there are staffing difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I am able to take at least a 30 minute meal break during my shift	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Individual assignments are fairly distributed within the unit given the available resources	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Most days I feel my workload is reasonable	1	2	3	4	5
5.	If I complain about my workload to the nurse manager she/he will be empathetic	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Equipment (blood pressure machines, sat monitors, scales, lifts, wheelchairs, thermometers) for patient care is available when I need it for patient care	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I work with nurses who I respect professionally	1	2	3	4	5
8.	When I feel overwhelmed I can count on other nurses to help me	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I stay in my current position because of the support of my nurse manager	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Social workers are available as needed by the patients I care for	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My current workload will cause me to look for a new position	1	2	3	4	5
12.	When a patient experiences a major crisis (code blue, new life-threatening diagnosis) or dies a chaplain is available to support the patient and/or their family.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I do not plan to stay in my current position for the next 12 months	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The nurse manager assists in working with patients and families who are unhappy with their care	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The nurses on my unit are a team	1	2	3	4	5
16.	The nurses I work with are competent in caring for our typical patient population	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I plan to stay in my current position for at least the next 12 months	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Supplies (IV supplies, catheters, dressings, syringes, linens) for patient care are available when I need them	1	2	3	4	5

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<i>Scale:</i>						
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Unsure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree						
19.	Pharmacy services provide adequate support in the medication process	1	2	3	4	5
20.	The nurse manager actively works to fill open positions on the unit in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5
21.	The nurse manager is actively involved in securing enough staff each shift that is needed	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I have voiced concerns about my workload being too heavy to the nurse manager or charge nurse	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I intend to look for a new position in a different unit or in a different organization within the next 12 months	1	2	3	4	5
24.	My manager is competent to provide basic patient care on the unit	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I am able to provide adequate psychological/emotional support to the patients assigned to me	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I would feel comfortable having one of my family members cared for by staff on my unit	1	2	3	4	5
27.	The nurse manager on my unit provides support in patient care when it is needed	1	2	3	4	5
28.	My current work environment makes me want to stay and work here	1	2	3	4	5
29.	The nurses I work with are an important reason I stay in my current job	1	2	3	4	5

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Work Environment Assessments

Step 1: Administer IWPS-R

We use the Individual Workload Perception Scale-Revised (IWPS-R) to test nurses' perceptions of their workload and organizational support. This survey is given electronically to all staff nurses involved in patient care at the bedside. A more detailed description of this process is available on Page 9.

Step 2: Receive Customized Results

The Center staff will analyze the results of your IWPS-R. The results will describe the demographics of your nursing workforce, as well as measure the six subscales of the IWPS-R: Manager Support, Peer Support, Unit Support, Workload, Intent to Stay, and Overall Nurse Satisfaction. This report will also benchmark your results to the national average, allowing you to compare your organization with the rest of the country. These customized reports will highlight strengths of your institution, as well as areas for improvement. The Center staff will also provide recommendations for interventions based on these IWPS-R results.

Step 3: Conduct Interventions

Based on the results from the IWPS-R, the Center will suggest strategies for improvements. Depending on the results, these interventions may take the form of Manager Leadership Academies, improving the work environment for older or new nurses, or Shared Governance workshops. Each intervention will be specifically customized to meet the needs of your organization.

Step 4: Administer IWPS-R Retest

After completing the interventions, it is time to resurvey the nurses using the IWPS-R. This retest should be given when all interventions have been completed and have had time to take effect and become integrated into the organization. After retaking the IWPS-R, the Center staff will provide you with a comparison of your initial IWPS-R results and your post-intervention results. This will allow you to see how your interventions have affected the targeted subscales.

Step 5: Implement Additional Interventions

If desired, additional interventions can be implemented based on the new results.

Administering the IWPS-R

Steps to Administer the IWPS-R:

1. Appoint the Research Coordinator

This person will be the contact point for the Center and will organize all of your efforts. He/she should have time to commit to the process and be organized and detail oriented.

2. Customize demographic parameters

All institutions must help customize the demographic section so it reflects their unique institutional structure. You will need to provide the Center with the names and areas of specialty of your selected units so that the form can be customized.

3. Prepare IRB submission

You will need to make sure that all of the materials that your participants will see and use in the survey process have been reviewed and approved by the appropriate administrative body; usually this is the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You cannot begin survey administration until this has occurred. To facilitate this process, the Center will provide you with a sample IRB submission form.

4. Obtain IRB approval

Once you have received IRB approval, send a copy of your approval letter to the Center, along with an accurate count of your nursing staff that provides direct patient care. *Your institution cannot start the administration of the IWPS-R until we have received the signed IRB approval letter.*

5. Administer the survey

The survey will be administered electronically via the Web. Once IRB approval has been obtained, a Web link will be provided to your institution, which can either be sent in an email to all intended participants or placed on your institution's Intranet. It is best to have the active link open for 2-3 weeks. Weekly reminders should also be sent to encourage participation.

6. Receive the results

After we have received and processed your data, we will send you a report of the results. We will also send you electronic copies of the report and charts.