

How Carilion Clinic Reimagined Rounding and Reduced Complaints by 70%

Key Improvement Areas

 **70%**
Decrease in patient complaints

 **33%**
Increase in the number of leader rounds completed

“Our goal was for every patient to get one leader visit a day. Historically only about 60 percent were seeing that. Now it's topping 80 percent, and with that consistency we're seeing improvements in quality, safety, experience, and likelihood to recommend.”

Brandon Jones

MSN, RN, CPXP, CEN, NEA-BC, Director Patient Experience



The Challenge

Carilion Clinic's rounding process needed a reset. Scripts were clunky. Nurse leader rounds and device rounds were combined into one. Making script changes was nearly impossible because no one “owned” the process. And when rounds did happen, they didn't always feel as meaningful as they could. And sometimes it felt more like a checklist than a connection.

The data wasn't much better: **500+ reports**, scattered everywhere, with little consistency or insight.

The team's goal was clear: make rounding part of daily practice, not a box-checking exercise.

The Journey

Step 1: Fix the foundation

In January 2023, leadership turned to Sybil Calhoun, MSN, BSN, RN, Nurse Quality Managing Director, to lead the CipherHealth Script Project. The goal was clear: strengthen patient advocacy and ensure consistent, high-quality care by overhauling rounding practices, streamlining scripts, and rebuilding reporting and dashboards so leaders could actually use the data.

Within a few months, Sybil pulled together a steering committee and got to work:

- Split nurse leader rounds and device rounds into separate scripts
- Rebuilt and refined scripts with input from frontline teams
- Consolidated 500+ reports into a simple approach tied to quality and safety goals
- Packaged resources so leaders could easily adopt the new scripts

Over the next year, the team expanded the program by adding scripts for pediatrics, ER, psych, imaging, and staff engagement. Each one was aligned to strategic priorities around patient experience and quality. By 2024, rounds were happening consistently, reporting was streamlined, and leaders had both the tools and actionable data they could rely on.

Step 2: Reimagine the experience

Then came the mindset shift. Brandon Jones, Director Patient Experience, led the charge to make rounding more consistent, purposeful and effective. He started off by asking care teams a simple but powerful question: why do nurse leader rounds?

The answer became their anchor: to create intentional, purposeful conversations that build trust, strengthen safety, and elevate the patient experience.

With that clarity, the language and the culture shifted:

- “Rounds” became “Visits.” No longer a task, but a connection.
- “Scripts” became “Guides.” Not something to read word-for-word, but a framework to guide real conversations.

Guides were then redesigned into **three phases of care**:



Admission → set expectations and surface prior experiences

- Completed by ‘the’ Unit Leader



Treatment → verify expectations are being met

- Completed by ‘a’ Unit Leader



Discharge → close the loop with “last chance” conversations and ensure no patient leaves with unresolved concerns

- Completed by ‘the’ Unit Leader

Lastly, Brandon’s team introduced simulation-based training that focused on communication and empathy. Built on real scenarios sourced from the leaders themselves, these sessions helped leaders practice meaningful conversations and strengthen connections with patients and families. It wasn’t just about documenting the work. Leaders were connecting with patients in real time and it showed.

The Results

This transformation delivered measurable change:

Leader visits jumped
from 60% to over

80%
of patients

And when patients receive a leader visit, scores for quality, safety, and likelihood to recommend all improve.

Complaint volume
dropped

70%

By addressing issues in the moment, Carilion shifted from service recovery to *trust recovery*.

Reporting became streamlined and

ACTIONABLE

500+ reports shrank into 118 reports and one consolidated dashboard, tailored by role, delivering real-time insights to the right people.

The Takeaway

Carilion Clinic’s two-year journey shows what happens when you rethink rounding processes to align with the end goals in mind - strong quality outcomes and meaningful connections with patients and high-quality service recovery. With a clear why, a new language, and the right tools, Carilion transformed a checklist exercise into a culture shift.

The result: more meaningful connections, fewer complaints, and stronger trust at every step of the patient journey.