



Strategy 18

Enhance the ability of nurses to advocate for themselves and their profession

Strategy 18.1 North Carolina nursing associations should continue to provide advocacy training opportunities for nurses and identify ways to increase uptake of these opportunities.

Strategy 18.2 Employers of nurses should encourage nurse participation in nursing associations and coalitions and consider employee benefits that would pay dues and permit work time dedicated to participating in membership activities.

Desired Result

Nurses will be empowered with training, tools, and coordinated efforts to advocate for their profession.

Why does the task force recommend this strategy?

By advocating for the profession, nurses can influence improvements in patient care standards, working conditions, and health care policies, leading to better health outcomes and a more sustainable health care system. Additionally, empowered nurses who actively participate in advocacy efforts contribute to the advancement of the nursing profession, helping to elevate the role of nursing within the health sector and society at large. This not only enhances the professional standing of nurses but also attracts new talent to the profession by showcasing nursing as a dynamic and influential field.

Context

NURSING ASSOCIATIONS IN NORTH CAROLINA

The **North Carolina Nurses Association (NCNA)** is the professional organization for registered nurses in North Carolina. It serves the needs of its members by addressing nursing issues and advocating for nursing and high-quality health care.² In February 2024, the NCNA announced a Diversity in Nursing Leadership Fellowship, in which it will partner with counterparts in Georgia and South Carolina to develop a new leadership program for nurses of color.³ This fellowship aims to provide professional nursing associations with increased access to a diverse pool of talented and engaged members such as board members and other association leaders.³

The **North Carolina Organization of Nurse Leaders (NCONL)** is the state-level affiliate of the American Organization of Nurse Leaders. NCONL works to strengthen nursing leadership through professional development and serves as the catalyst for promoting unity and cohesiveness across the nursing profession in the state.⁴ NCONL also nurtures key relationships, such as those with the North Carolina Board of Nursing, the North Carolina Healthcare Association, and the NCNA, while serving as a partner nursing organization to the North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition.

North Carolina has a state chapter of the **National Association of Licensed Practical/Licensed Vocational Nurses**. The organization provides continuing education, certifications, scholarships, guidance and professional advice, and member support and networking.⁵

The **North Carolina Association of Nursing Students** is open to students enrolled in an accredited North Carolina nursing program at all levels, including pre-nursing students. It was chartered as a student branch of the NCNA in 1958 and continues to work with the NCNA to aid nursing students in the transition to nursing practice.

Several associations in the state represent and support specific racial and ethnic groups of nurses. Some of these include:

- Chapters of the **National Black Nurses Association, Inc.**
- **Philippine Nurses Association of North Carolina**
- **Indian American Nurses Association of North Carolina**
- **Nigerian Nurses Association of North Carolina**
- **The North Carolina chapter of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Nurses Association**

In addition, there are associations for nurses based on specific areas of practice. Some of these include:

- **North Carolina Association of Public Health Nurse Administrators**
- **School Nurses Association of North Carolina**
- **The North Carolina chapter of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association**
- **North Carolina Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association**
- **The North Carolina chapter of the National Association of Directors of Nursing in Long Term Care**
- **North Carolina Association of Occupational Health Nurses**
- **North Carolina Emergency Nurses Association**
- **North Carolina Association of Nurse Anesthetists**
- **Regional chapters of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses**

Statewide activities that have valuable opportunities for nurse participation are also being led by:

- **North Carolina Center on the Workforce for Health**
- **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**
- **North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition**

CHAPTER 4 - VALUING NURSES AND NURSING CARE

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN NURSING ASSOCIATIONS AND COALITIONS

Nursing associations provide opportunities for continuing education, skill development, and access to resources that can enhance nurses' knowledge and expertise. They also allow nurses an opportunity to connect with colleagues, mentors, and leaders in their field, fostering relationships that can provide support, guidance, and possible career development.⁶ The skill development and learning provided through nursing associations can ultimately benefit patient care.

Nursing associations advocate for the interests of nurses and the nursing profession, allowing nurses to address issues affecting their practice, health care delivery, and patient outcomes.⁷ They are critical for generating ideas and proactive work that is needed to maintain accountability in the profession and address issues affecting workforce capacity.⁷

Supporting involvement in nursing associations allows nurses to build professional networks that can benefit employers through collaborations and access to resources and expertise from other health care organizations. It can also improve retention rates by promoting a sense of belonging, loyalty, and investment in the organization.

A primary deterrent to joining a nursing association can be membership cost, with the average association dues costing approximately \$200 per year. In addition, many new nurses entering the profession may lack information about the organizations that are possible to join.

Employers' payment of employees' professional association dues is an investment in the workforce. Employees feel valued when their employers invest in their growth and development, which can lead to higher levels of engagement and retention within the organization. By subsidizing or fully covering the cost of nursing association memberships, employers demonstrate a commitment to supporting their staff's professional development and providing incentives for joining these organizations.

In addition, providing opportunities for nurses to participate in organization membership activities during work time can bring several benefits to both the employee and the employer. For example, organization activities like meetings, workshops, or conferences allow nurses to enhance their professional knowledge and skills.⁸ By encouraging and supporting nurses' participation in organization membership activities, employers encourage a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within the organization.