

Strategy 19

Enhance the ability of the public to advocate for nurses

Strategy 19.1 North Carolina nursing associations should expand consumer outreach efforts to help support enhanced understanding of the value of nursing contributions to health care.

Desired Result

Health care consumers will have a better understanding of the variety of nursing roles and the importance of nurses to the health care system. Those interested in advocating for the nursing workforce will have tools to do so.

Why does the task force recommend this strategy?

An informed consumer who recognizes the multifaceted role of nurses can better appreciate the complexities of health care services and the critical nature of nursing work. This understanding fosters respect and effective communication between patients and nurses, enhancing the care experience. Moreover, public advocacy for the nursing workforce—such as supporting policies that improve nurse working conditions and ensure competitive compensation—can directly contribute to the improvement of working conditions, interest in careers in nursing, and ultimately a sufficient and stable nursing workforce. Health care consumers play a vital role in championing the nursing profession, which in turn benefits the broader health care system and its ability to meet the needs of those it serves.

Context

Health care consumers have a powerful voice in advocating for the nursing workforce, leveraging their unique position to initiate change and improve conditions for nurses. These are several ways in which consumers can actively support nurses:

- **Education and awareness:** Consumers can seek information on issues such as workplace safety and the mental health challenges that nurses encounter. Understanding these issues allows consumers to advocate more effectively.
- **Support for nursing organizations:** Many nursing organizations lead efforts to improve working conditions for nurses and advance the profession. Consumers can support these organizations by participating in their campaigns, donating, or spreading their message.
- **Advocacy for policy change:** Consumers can advocate for policy changes that benefit the nursing workforce. This could involve supporting legislation that addresses mental health support for health care workers or offers educational incentives for nursing students. Consumers can make their voices heard by engaging with policymakers through writing letters, making phone calls, or participating in advocacy days.
- **Public support and recognition:** Showing public support and appreciation for nurses can have a profound impact. This could be as simple as thanking nurses for their service or as public as writing op-eds, blog posts, or social media content that highlights the importance of nurses and the need to support them.
- **Participate in hospital or clinic patient and family advisory councils:** Many health care facilities have advisory councils that include patients and family members. These councils provide feedback on patient care experiences and can be a platform to advocate for improvements that will benefit the nursing staff and, consequently, patient care.
- **Encourage workplace safety:** Advocating for workplace safety measures to protect nurses from violence and injury is crucial. Consumers can support policies and practices that ensure a safe working environment for nurses, such as adequate security measures and protocols for handling aggressive behavior.
- **Feedback to health care facilities:** Providing positive feedback about nurses and nursing care to health care facilities and community organizations not only recognizes and validates the hard work of nurses but also reinforces to health care administrators the value of investing in their nursing workforce.

KEY RESOURCE NEEDS



Nursing associations may need additional financial resources to implement any new outreach to health care consumers.