Strategy 20
Use value-based payment and develop mechanisms to quantify the importance of nursing in quality care

Strategy 20.1 North Carolina health insurance plans and payers and NC Medicaid should incorporate nationally recognized nurse-sensitive indicators for acute and ambulatory settings as part of quality measures for providers engaged in value-based payment arrangements. To start, this should focus on quality measures that are already being measured.

Strategy 20.2 The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with nursing workforce researchers, should evaluate nurse-sensitive quality indicator data across providers to identify trends in staffing policies and team-based care approaches that are most supportive of higher quality.

Desired Result
Data on quality of care will reflect the value that nurses bring to patient care.

Why does the task force recommend this strategy?
Nurse-sensitive indicators (NSI) can directly reflect the quality and safety of patient care, which are core to value-based health care. Measuring and monitoring these indicators can help health care providers identify areas for improvement in patient care and mechanisms to reduce the cost of care. More to the point of the task force's recommendation, monitoring NSIs can highlight the critical role of nursing in patient care, acknowledging that nurses are integral to achieving positive health outcomes. Integrating these indicators supports a holistic approach to patient care, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, patient-centeredness, and the contribution of each health care professional.

Context
NSIs are metrics that gauge the quality and effectiveness of nursing care and its impact on patient outcomes. These indicators include health complications, staffing levels, nursing satisfaction, and patient satisfaction. NSIs can be used in value-based payment arrangements, which prioritize outcomes, quality, and efficiency over the volume of services provided.

Research suggests that improving nurse-sensitive indicators can enhance patient experiences and outcomes, leading to higher performance scores and potentially greater reimbursements under value-based care arrangements.[11] Thus, investing in nursing care by focusing on these indicators not only improves patient care but also aligns with the financial objectives of health care organizations transitioning to value-based payment models.

NSIs are most commonly attributed to acute care settings as these measures can be difficult to identify for ambulatory care settings. This is in part because of the nature of practice and nursing roles not being standardized in ambulatory care. However, in 2013, a task force commissioned by the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing produced a report that describes:

- The evidence behind NSIs in ambulatory care.
- Existing NSIs with recommended changes for more meaningful use in ambulatory care.
- 13 newly proposed measures that uniquely reflect the role of the RN in the ambulatory care setting.[12]

Examples of Nurse-Sensitive Indicators

Structure	Process	Outcome
• Nurse turnover	• Advance care planning	• Assaults
• Patient volume and flow	• Body mass index screening and follow-up	• Catheter-associated urinary tract infections
• Patient contacts	• Care coordination	• Multidrug-resistant organisms
• RN education/specialty certification	• Depression screening and follow-up	• Pain impairing function
• Staffing and skill mix	• Diabetes care	• Patient falls
• Workforce characteristics	• Hypertension screening and follow-up	• Pediatric peripheral intravenous infiltrations
	• Restraints	• Pressure injuries
	• Suicide risk screening and follow-up	• Ventilator-associated events

Source: PressGaney. Your comprehensive guide to the Press Ganey National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI). https://info.pressganey.com/press-ganey-blog-healthcare-experience-insights/your-comprehensive-guide-to-the-press-ganey-national-database-of-nursing-quality-indicators-ndnqi

Many NSIs are already tracked as standard quality metrics. This is important to note, as documentation burden can be a significant challenge for nurses and there is little interest in adding additional data collection or documentation. Health care institutions can also use data analytics tools to extract and analyze information related to NSIs from existing datasets. By doing so, organizations can identify trends, areas for improvement, and the impact of nursing care on patient outcomes without needing extra documentation. Another approach is to align NSIs with already mandated quality measures and reporting systems. This alignment ensures that data collection serves multiple purposes, including regulatory compliance and quality improvement. For example, if a quality measure focuses on patient falls, the same data can be used to analyze the relationship to nurse-sensitive aspects such as staffing levels and nursing interventions.

USING NSIS TO INDICATE THE VALUE OF NURSING CARE

Data from nurse-sensitive indicators can be powerful in showcasing the value that nurses bring to health care, since they can directly reflect the quality of care and patient outcomes influenced by nursing activities. By analyzing trends and outcomes associated with these indicators, researchers can:

1. **Demonstrate Nursing Impact on Patient Outcomes:** Data showing improvements or stability in areas such as reduced infection rates or enhanced patient recovery times can directly correlate to the quality of nursing care.

2. **Identify Optimal Staffing Models:** By linking patient outcomes to staffing levels and skill mix, organizations can make data-driven decisions about staffing needs. This can help justify the allocation of resources toward nursing and support the implementation of staffing models that optimize patient care and nurse well-being.

3. **Highlight Areas for Improvement:** Data from NSIs can identify areas where nursing care can be enhanced, guiding targeted interventions and training programs.

4. **Support Advocacy and Policymaking:** Evidence from NSIs can be used to advocate for policy changes at both the institutional and governmental levels.

5. **Financial Implications:** Data linking nursing care to cost savings, such as through reduced hospital readmissions or shorter lengths of stay, can highlight the economic value nurses bring to health care institutions.