

Serving the profession

By Barbara B. Blozen, EdD, MA, RN-BC, CNL

● Help protect the health, welfare, and safety of the public.

WHEN I ASK my students, “What’s the role of the board of nursing?” many think it serves to protect nurses. The truth, though, is that a state’s board of nursing (BON) is charged with protecting the health, welfare, and safety of the public.

Board service is an important part of participation in the nursing community and a great way for emerging nurse leaders to get involved. The work demands time and attention to the BON’s mission, but the result is fulfilling and rewarding.

BON structure

The BONs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the four U.S. territories are members of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), a nonprofit organization. NCSBN is the vehicle through which state boards act and provide regulatory excellence for the public. Membership to NCSBN is available only to a state or territorial BON empowered to license and regu-

late nursing practice. The NCSBN’s policy-making body, the delegate assembly, has final membership approval.

As state government agencies, BONs are responsible for regulating nursing practice. Each state determines the administrative responsibilities and oversight of its individual BON. Depending on the state, the BON reports to the governor, a state agency (such as consumer affairs or public safety), or both the governor and a state agency. In some cases, the board may report to another state official or organization.

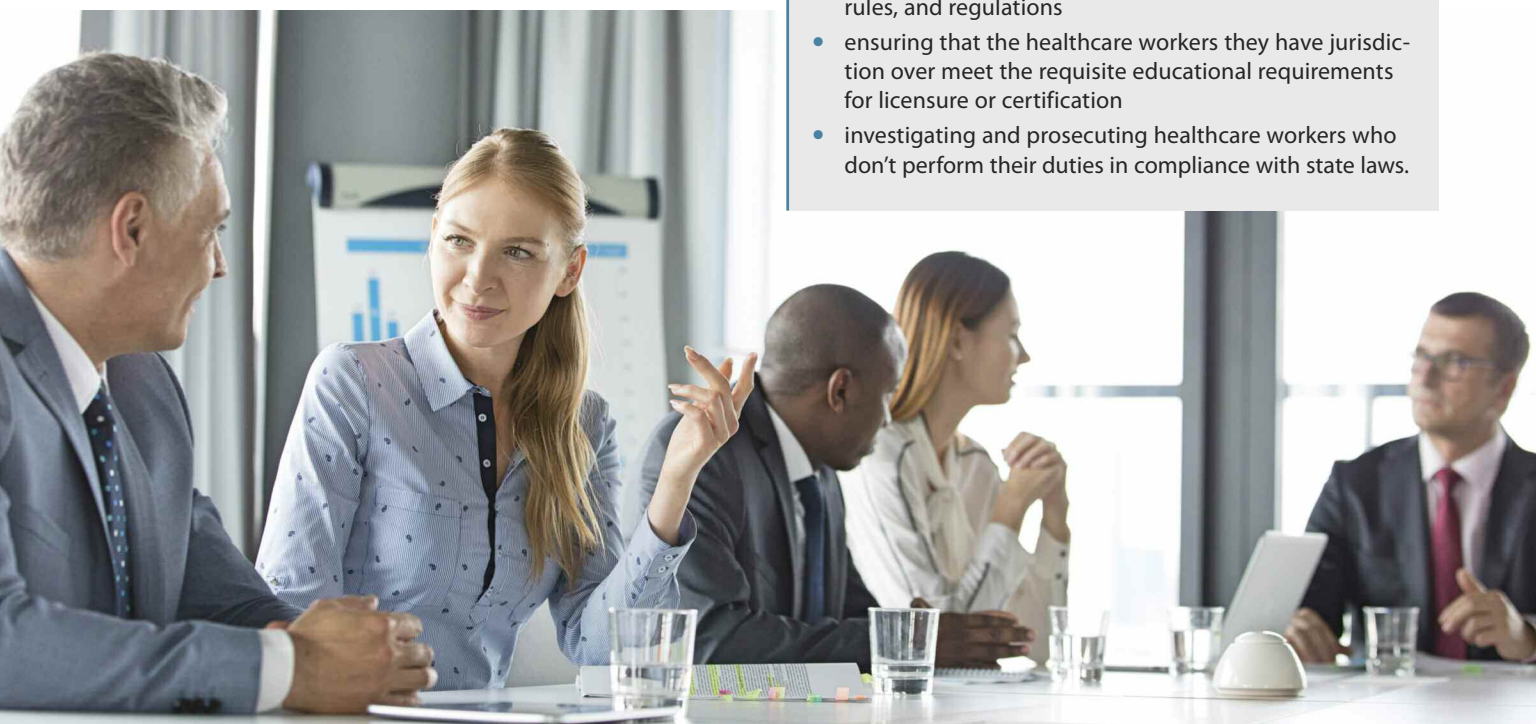
A board’s composition, decision-making powers, and authority vary by state. Membership typically includes a mix of registered nurses, licensed practical and vocational nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, and consumers. Members are appointed to their position.

In most states, BON authority includes overseeing and regulating the nursing profession and examining

BON mission

Boards of nursing (BONs) achieve their mission to protect the public by:

- enforcing the Nurse Practice Act and nurse licensure rules
- accrediting or approving nurse education programs in schools and universities
- developing practice standards, policies, administrative rules, and regulations
- ensuring that the healthcare workers they have jurisdiction over meet the requisite educational requirements for licensure or certification
- investigating and prosecuting healthcare workers who don’t perform their duties in compliance with state laws.





6 competencies of board service

Stalter and Arms defined six competencies required for board service.

- 1 Exercise professional commitment to serve on a governing board—**Understand your own professional goals before making a commitment to serve.
- 2 Be knowledgeable about board types, bylaws, and job description—**Attend your first meeting prepared with an understanding of the board's goals and functions.
- 3 Know standard business protocols,**

board member roles, and voting processes—Learn about Robert's Rules of Order (rulesonline.com/), which is the meeting format used by most boards.

- 4 Use principles for managing effective and efficient board meetings—**Make meeting attendance part of your regular calendar of activities; avoid not attending, except when absolutely necessary.
- 5 Understand ethical and legal processes for conducting board meetings—**Although the board

president is responsible for maintaining order during meetings, all members must be prepared to help facilitate civil debate.

- 6 Employ strategies to maintain control in intense or uncivil situations—**These situations can be controlled by setting limits, redirecting the group to agenda items, and objecting to unrelated discussions.

Source: Stalter AM, Arms D. Serving on organizational boards: What nurses need to know. *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*. 2016;21(2):8. goo.gl/kGqoXs

applicants for nursing licenses. In addition, most boards have the legal authority to operate a nursing program in the state, prescribe standards, set faculty requirements and curricula for schools, and perform site visits. In many states, the board determines training requirements for unlicensed assistive personnel and can impose legal sanctions or close a program. (See *BON mission*.)

How to join your BON

Before joining your state's BON, assess your time. Members meet monthly or more often when needed to oversee board activities and take disciplinary action on nurse licenses. You must be able to commit time to board service. Stalter and Arms describe six competencies for BON service, including a professional commitment and an appreciation for the ethical and legal processes. (See *6 competencies of board service*.)

Requirements for membership and application methods vary by state and are delineated by state nurse practice acts. For example, in some states you submit your curriculum vitae through the governor's website. To learn about the specific requirements for your state, visit your local BON site. Or you can go to the NCSBN website (ncsbn.org), where you can find a link to your state's site.

Make an impact

Serving on a state BON gives you the opportunity to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of your state. It's a great way to contribute to the profession, build leadership skills, and give back to your community. ★

Visit americannursetoday.com/?p=35869 for a list of selected references.

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