ANA
AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

Driving staffing solutions

Stakeholders join forces to address the nursing shortage.

By Kendra McMillan, MPH, RN

Addressing the nurse staffing crisis is a marathon in need of sustainable solutions to build a workforce at the crux of safe, quality healthcare.

THE COVID-19 pandemic response has magnified long-standing nurse staffing deficits burdening the workforce. In a September 2021 COVID-19 survey by the American Nurses Foundation, 41.2% of nurses indicated insufficient staffing as the reason for wanting to leave their position and 46.86% indicated that work is negatively affecting their health and well-being (nursingworld.org/covid-19-survey-series-results). Earlier studies show that inadequate nurse staffing and the resulting unhealthy work environments are primary drivers of stress, chronic fatigue, increased substance misuse and abuse, death by suicide, depression, anxiety, and a reason nurses opt to leave their position.

Addressing the nurse staffing crisis is a marathon in need of sustainable solutions to build a workforce at the crux of safe, quality healthcare. Solutions must address root causes of decades-long cyclic staffing shortages rather than a bandage approach to fix a laceration.

Think tank convened

To effect change, the American Nurses Association (ANA), in collaboration with the Association of Critical-Care Nurses, American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL), Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), and Institute for Healthcare Improvement, is launching a nurse staffing think tank to link nurses and workforce experts interested in driving solutions to the nurse staffing shortage. The think tank has five key roles:

- Review qualitative and quantitative data to allow us to understand and analyze root causes.
- Identify all implications that may not have been considered, including nurses and nurse leaders' concerns, palatability of cost scenarios, and care delivery models.
- Help narrow or coalesce the range of options to inform a National Staffing Task Force.
- Raise questions about the trends, issues, and other implications that may be important to assess feasibility and practicability.
- Develop actionable strategies that organiza-

tions and leaders can implement within a year with measurable outcomes for impact.

Nurse Staffing Task Force formed

The think tank's effort provides a foundation for a newly formed National Nurse Staffing Task Force, a collaborative comprising stakeholders and representatives from several organizations, associations, and entities affected by the staffing crisis or can provide evidence-based data to address it. Launched by the five core organizations mentioned above, the task force aims to:

- provide a forum for powerful dialogue on a national scale to address critical issues
- facilitate progress toward innovative solutions consistent with appropriate staffing and optimizing patient care delivery in acute and critical care settings
- build the nursing workforce through long-term sustainable recruitment and retention solutions
- support and sustain a healthy work environment using principles and guidelines for appropriate staffing that correlate with optimal nurse satisfaction, care outcomes, and patient safety.

Policy solutions also play a role. In September 2021, ANA called on the Health and Human Services Administration to take concrete action to address the crisis-level nurse staffing shortage. ANA's recommendations include actions to achieve pay equity and full scope of practice for advanced practice RNs and enhance nurses' mental health support.

Evidence shows that optimal staffing benefits both nurses and patients. *The Business of Caring: Promoting Optimal Allocation of Nursing Resources*, by ANA, AONL, and HFMA, sets forth an action plan for improving allocation of nursing resources. You can download it at nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nurse-staffing/staffing-principles.   **AN**

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