

OK-WINs: Advancing Access Through Investment in the Advanced Practice Nursing Workforce

Kimberly Allen, DNP, APRN-CNP; Julie Gordon, DrPH, CPHQ; Amy Costner-Lark, DNP, APRN-CNP; Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing University of Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Workforce Innovations in Nursing (OK-WINs) initiative at the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing addresses one of the state's most urgent healthcare challenges: the shortage of advanced practice nurses (APNs), particularly in rural and underserved communities. Funded by a \$2.5 million, four-year grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), OK-WINs expands the number, preparation, and equitable distribution of APNs across Oklahoma.

Over 59% of Oklahoma residents live in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for primary care—nearly double the national average (Oklahoma State Department of Health, 2023). This gap highlights the critical need for family nurse practitioners, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners, and adult/gerontology clinical nurse specialists, especially in communities with limited access to care. OK-WINs helps fill this gap by supporting up to 25 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students annually through scholarships and stipends that ease financial burdens and promote educational attainment.

A key feature of OK-WINs is its emphasis on social determinants of health (SDOH). Integrating SDOH into nursing curricula prepares students to recognize and address upstream drivers of health disparities. Davis et al. (2021) emphasize that incorporating SDOH-rich content and experiential learning into nursing education fosters advocacy and leadership in advancing health equity.

The initiative also strengthens academic-clinical partnerships in underserved areas, enabling students to train in high-need settings. Faculty and pre-

ceptor development further expand the capacity to deliver high-quality advanced practice education. These efforts align with national strategies to grow the APN workforce through academic innovation, as supported by Margolis et al. (2024) and Donelan et al. (2024).

As of November 2025, Oklahoma APNs can practice without prescriptive supervision. This policy change is expected to significantly increase access to care, particularly in rural and underserved areas. By allowing APNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training, Oklahoma can better meet the healthcare needs of its residents. This regulatory shift is anticipated to enhance the growth of the APN workforce and improve healthcare delivery across the state.

OK-WINs is a critical investment in Oklahoma's health infrastructure. By developing the APN workforce, embedding SDOH into education, and expanding access through clinical partnerships, the initiative strengthens care delivery across the state. With policy reform to enable full practice authority, Oklahoma can more fully leverage the capacity of its advanced practice nurses to meet the needs of its underserved communities.

Funding statement

This program is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$649,905 with 0% percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the

U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov). ■

References

- Davis, V. H., Murillo, C., Chappell, K. K., & Donnelly, G. F. (2021). Tipping point: Integrating social determinants of health concepts in a college of nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 60(12), 703–706. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20211004-05>
- Donelan, K., Hesgrove, B., Nooney, J. G., & Buerhaus, P. I. (2024). Nurse Corps' impact on increasing registered nurse staffing in critical shortage areas and facilities, 2017 to 2022. *Nursing Outlook*, 72(5), 102233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2024.102233>
- Margolis, M., Clancy, C., Hayes, R., & Popejoy, L. (2024). How academia can help to grow—and sustain—a robust nursing workforce. *Nursing Outlook*, 72(1), 102017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2023.102017>
- Reagan, P. B., & Salsberry, P. J. (2013). The effects of state-level scope-of-practice regulations on the number and growth of nurse practitioners. *Nursing Outlook*, 61(6), 392–399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2013.04.007>

