



Leadership Summit 2025 – A Report from the President

Kathleen W. Neal, PhD, RN

The 2025 Leadership Summit focused on strengthening nursing leadership, governance, and innovation nationwide. I attended

on behalf of the Delaware Nurses Association (DNA) to ensure Delaware nurses are informed, prepared, and positioned to lead.

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I learned lots of things that will help us move forward with some of challenges that we would like to address, and came away very, very proud of our accomplishments during the past year.

Additionally, we heard an impassioned and impactful presentation from the ANA President - **Jennifer S. Mensik Kennedy, PhD, MBA, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN**. Her presentation is included in this edition of the DNA Reporter. I found it to be inspirational, thought-provoking and a true recognition of the challenges we faced during 2025. I hope you will take a few minutes to read it; it will help you maintain hope and passion for The Power of Nurses™.

Here's a summary of the Summit and notes about how this information applies to us. Please email or call if you would like more information about any of these topics, want to talk about becoming a member, want to get involved, or just want to chat about the state of nursing in Delaware. Always happy to hear from you!

At a Glance: What the DNA Has Accomplished

- Strengthened our approach to governance, accountability, and board service. Developed new job descriptions and rubrics to guide the Board members' election process. Also developed a Code of Conduct for meetings and DNA activities. The formats for these were borrowed from ANA revisions to their own documents.
- Gained critical guidance to support the launch of the **Delaware Nurses Foundation and the Delaware Nurses Workforce Institute**, as well as things to think about for DNA as the parent organization.
- **Developed strong, impactful relationships** with Delaware Legislators, and made a real impact with Delaware's members of Congress during Hill Day 2025. These have made the

DNA a noted resource for policy development.

- Celebrated a major **membership milestone**.
- Advanced conversations on **AI, equity, and the future of nursing practice**
- Built national partnerships that will directly benefit Delaware nurses. Collaboration and innovation have become strong points in our relationships.
- Helped to **develop the ANA NextGen Initiatives and Ambassador Program**. Stephanie McClellan, DNP, MBA, RN, CMSRN, NE-BC, former DNA President, is a member of the initial committee to develop and implement this program.
- Contributing to the national conversation of adding Licensed Practical Nurses to ANA membership with DNA Board member Kimberly Fisher, LPN serving on the ANA committee to consider this Bylaws change. While LPN members are welcome to join DNA and some other C/SNA organizations, we need to make them full members by admitting them to the ANA, too. Congratulations to Kimberly for their strong, knowledgeable leadership on this important path forward.

Governance & Leadership: Raising the Bar

The Summit opened with sessions on nonprofit governance, legal responsibilities, and risk management. Topics included board roles, executive leadership, employment considerations, and conflicts of interest.

What this means for DNA:

- Review of current governance requirements
- Development of an updated conflict-of-interest policy for board and committee members

Callout: Accountability in Action

Strong governance protects our mission,

our members, and the public we serve.

Launching the Delaware Nurses Foundation

As DNA prepares to launch the **Delaware Nurses Foundation**, sessions on foundation governance and best practices were especially valuable.

Key takeaways:

- Effective governance models for subsidiaries and for C/SNA
- Sustainable operations and partnerships
- Long-term alignment between foundations and state associations

Callout: What's Coming in 2026

The Delaware Nurses Foundation will expand opportunities to support nurses, education, and innovation across Delaware.

Membership: A Shared Challenge—and a Success

Membership recruitment and retention emerged as a nationwide concern for state nursing associations. For DNA, this discussion came with good news.

Callout: Membership Milestone

DNA surpassed its 2025 goal and now proudly represents **over 1,000 members**.

This achievement reflects the dedication of the DNA Board and the commitment of Delaware nurses who see membership as a way to advance consideration of our patients, populations, and the profession. New membership goals will be set for 2026.

Collaboration, Innovation & AI

Summit participants committed to sharing solutions and measuring outcomes across states. Chief Staff Officers also explored the growing role of **Artificial Intelligence** in association management.

Next steps for DNA:

Development of **guidelines for responsible AI** use in nonprofit settings during 2026

Callout: Learning Together

Our challenges are shared—and so are the solutions.

Board Service: Clear Roles, Better Preparation

Sessions on board orientation and responsibilities emphasized the importance of clarity between board and staff roles.

Members will see:

- Clear, comprehensive board orientation materials
- Improved transparency for those considering board service

National Leadership & the Next Generation

We heard directly from the ANA Executive Board, including a powerful message from the ANA President acknowledging the challenges nurses faced—and what they accomplished—in 2025.

We also met nurses from ANA's inaugural **NextGen and Ambassador programs**, sparking discussion about future state-level leadership development.

Callout: Investing in Nurse Leaders

DNA will explore ways to best support and prepare nurse leaders at both state and national levels in 2026.

Equity, Engagement & the Future of Practice

The Summit concluded with sessions on equity, engagement, and AI in nursing practice.

Looking ahead:

- Attendance at the **2026 Opportunity and Impact Summit**. Chris and I will be attending in February.
- Sharing strategies with DNA's DEI Committee and the planned **Delaware Nurses Workforce Institute**.
- Continued development of AI guidance specific to nursing practice.

Closing Reflection

The Leadership Summit reaffirmed that DNA is moving in step with—and often ahead of—national priorities. I am honored to represent you and confident that Delaware nurses will continue to lead with knowledge, integrity, and innovation.

Thank you for your engagement and commitment to nursing in Delaware. Here's a reaffirmation to The Power of Nurses™! ■

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