



# Stewardship of Nursing: A Professional Responsibility

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Recently, I attended a leadership training session with the Florida Nurses Foundation alongside members of the Florida Nurses Association Board. During the session, the speaker shared a quote by Theodore Roosevelt that has stayed with me:

*"Every man owes a part of his time and money to the business or industry in which he is engaged. No man has a moral right to withhold his support from an organization that is striving to improve conditions within his sphere."*

This quote resonates because it speaks directly to professional responsibility. It reminds us that progress in any discipline, particularly one as essential as nursing, depends on individuals who are willing to invest their time, talent, and resources in strengthening the profession and the communities it serves.

## Stewardship as a Professional and Ethical Obligation

Stewardship is more than a leadership concept; it is an ethical obligation and a professional promise. In nursing, stewardship reflects our collective responsibility to preserve the integrity of the discipline, advance nursing knowledge, sustain the workforce, and ensure that nursing continues to serve the public good today and for generations to come.

The 2025 revision of the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* issued by the American Nurses Association reinforces this responsibility, emphasizing accountability not only to patients but also to the profession, communities, and society at large. Several provisions call on nurses to safeguard standards of practice, advance nursing science, foster ethical work environments, and advocate for social justice and equity. The inclusion of a new provision addressing global and environmental health further expands the scope of stewardship, reminding

us that nursing's responsibilities extend well beyond individual roles and local settings.

## The Role of Nursing Foundations

Nursing foundations play a vital role in advancing stewardship. Philanthropic investments enable scholarships that strengthen the nursing workforce pipeline, fund research that generates evidence to improve care, and support leadership development for nurses prepared to influence health systems and policy. These investments are not acts of charity alone; they are strategic commitments to the future of nursing.

At the Florida Nurses Foundation, we see the impact of stewardship every day. Scholarships open doors for aspiring nurses and emerging leaders. Research grants support innovation and evidence-based practice. Leadership initiatives prepare nurses to serve at the highest levels of influence. Each of these efforts represents a tangible investment in the profession's sustainability and impact.

## A Shared Responsibility for Nursing's Future

Stewardship is a shared responsibility. It calls on nurse leaders to lead with integrity, educators to prepare future stewards of the profession, scholars to protect the rigor and relevance of nursing science, and donors to give with purpose and vision. Most importantly, stewardship asks each of us to consider the legacy we are creating for those who will follow.

This responsibility is not limited to academic or doctoral roles. Clinicians, executives, educators, and students all contribute to sustaining nursing's values, identity, and influence. Stewardship is evident when experienced nurses mentor new colleagues, when

organizations create ethical and supportive practice environments, and when nurses advocate for policies that promote health equity and workforce well-being.

As nursing continues to navigate unprecedented challenges, including workforce shortages, health inequities, and rapid transformation of health care systems, stewardship must remain central to our leadership decisions. Nursing's future depends not only on what we do today, but on how thoughtfully and ethically we care for the profession itself.

## A Call to Action

Each of us has a role to play in stewarding the future of nursing. Whether you are a student, clinician, educator, executive, or retiree, your engagement matters. Stewardship may take many forms, such as mentoring an emerging nurse, advocating for ethical practice environments, contributing to professional organizations, or supporting scholarships and research through purposeful philanthropy.

I invite you to reflect on how you can invest in the profession that has given so much to all of us. Consider giving your time, talent, or resources to organizations working to strengthen nursing in Florida and beyond. By supporting nursing foundations and professional associations, you help develop future leaders, advance nursing science, and ensure that our profession remains strong, ethical, and prepared to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Stewardship is not an obligation reserved for a few; it is a shared responsibility and a powerful opportunity. Together, we can shape a future for nursing that reflects our values, honors our legacy, and inspires those who will follow. ■