

Advancing Our Practice through Leadership: Highlights from the 2026 Spring Ohio Nursing Organizations Leadership Summit

Contributing Author: Sally Morgan, MS, RN, AGPCNP-BC



Leaders from Ohio professional nursing organizations gathered on April 17, 2026, at the 2026 Spring Ohio Nursing Organization Summit. The summit featured a range of distinguished speakers addressing various topics, all dedicated to advancing nursing and improving patient outcomes. Nurse leaders discussed the power of education which enables nurses to influence change throughout Ohio, strategies to improve practice readiness for future ways nurses can help remove barriers to patient voting, and updates from the Ohio Board of Nursing (OBN).

Rebecca M. Patton, DNP, RN, CNOR, FAAN, President of ANA-Ohio, and Tiffany Bukoffsky, MHA, BSN, RN, Executive Director of ANA-Ohio, opened the summit with their presentation, *The Power of Nursing in Ohio: Collaborating to Advance Nursing and Recognition*. This presentation highlighted the power of nurses, beginning with education, and

its impact on nurses' voting and voter registration. With more than 200,000 licensed nurses in Ohio (OBN, 2023), the profession represents a significant and influential voice at the polls and within the State House. Therefore, when nurses across Ohio align their efforts and advocate collectively, it can serve as a catalyst for statewide impact. Opportunities, such as Nurses Week, create natural moments for nurses to join forces for change (Patton & Bukoffsky, 2026).

At the 2025 Fall Nursing Organizations Leadership Summit, Mary Cook, DNP, RN, CNE (2025) presented *Emerging Strategies to Strengthen Nursing Education and Practice Readiness*. Amy Tootle, DNP, RN, CNML, Student Nursing Assistant Program Manager at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center (OSUWMC), continued the conversation. She presented *Reimagining the Nursing Career Pipeline*, highlighting the partnership between OSUWMC and The

Ohio State University College of Nursing (Tootle, 2026). This program is designed to create early and sustained pathways into the nursing profession. Key initiatives include the Nursing Career Pipelines Program, the Summer Institute for Future Nurses, and the Student Nurse Externship Program, all of which provide valuable exposure and hands-on experience for high school students.

OSUWMC has also implemented an Academic Practice Partnership model to strengthen collaboration between academic institutions and clinical practice settings. This approach supports evidence-based strategies to improve student retention at clinical sites following graduation. Additional innovations include a tiered system for Student Nursing Assistants (SNAs) aligned with their level of education and a Transition to Practice residency program at The James for nurses with less than 1 year of experience, supporting their successful transition into professional practice (Tootle, 2026).

As nurses, empowering patients and promoting civic engagement are priorities. Sophia Lombardo, M.Ed., Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Metro Columbus, and Lara K. Palay, MSW, LISW-S, a League of Women Voters (LWV) volunteer, highlighted this in their presentation *Empowering Voters in Healthcare Settings: A Nonpartisan Guide for Ohio Nurses* (2026). The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting informed and active participation in government.

The speakers emphasized that voting is a social determinant of health. Civic participation is associated with better self-reported health outcomes, and communities with reduced access to voting often experience poorer health outcomes and greater health disparities. The speakers indicated that barriers to voting include hospitalization during elections, limited mobility, lack of awareness of absentee voting options, complex and changing voting rules, and time-sensitive deadlines. Voting requirements and considerations for individuals who are hospitalized or residing in long-term care facilities were also discussed.

Erin Keels, DNP, APRN-CNP, President of the Ohio Board of Nursing, and Jack Brubaker, Legislative Liaison at the Ohio Board of Nursing (OBN), provided updates on several key initiatives and developments. These included highlights from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) 2024 National Workforce Survey, findings from the Ohio Workforce Survey, updates to the NCLEX, and recent legislative activity impacting nursing practice in Ohio.

Tiffany Bukoffsky concluded the summit by announcing the launch of a dedicated workspace for organizational leaders on the ANA-Ohio website. All

association leadership participants have been granted access, and attendees should have received an email with login instructions and details. The workspace serves as a central hub for collaboration and resource sharing, featuring discussion boards, shared files contributed by association members, and a record of workspace activity. A directory of summit attendees is also available to support ongoing communication and connection among participants. ■

References online:
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Enhancing Our Practice by Advancing One Another

Contributing Author: Andrea DeSapri, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, NPD-BC

There are a multitude of approaches to enhancing nursing practice especially through the lens of evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and nursing research. From the perspective of a Nursing Professional Development Specialist who supports the onboarding and ongoing professional development of nurses, enhancing our practice frequently focuses on retention initiatives to build strength and experience within our healthcare teams. Enhancing our practice means establishing strong, collaborative, and respectful relationships with our peers and uplifting them through partnership. Peer mentorship programs, regardless of role, tenure, location, or experience level, help to ensure that we are advancing each other as well as the science behind our practice.

Throughout the literature, there are numerous examples and insights as to how mentorship programs can benefit participants, both mentors and mentees alike. Sheppard-Law et al. (2018),

discuss a novice clinical nurse educator mentorship program in which participants, “transformed their clinical practice through an increase in knowledge, skills, and understanding of evidence-based practice. Such skills included participants being able to critique the literature and to feel confident to implement change in their clinical setting” (p. 212). Utilizing collaborative, reciprocal frameworks to structure mentorship programs can increase the confidence of both parties and support the mutual professional development of mentors and mentees through the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and clinical experiences (Jacobson & Sherrod, 2012). When combined with the advances of evidence and research, empowering others via mentorship can do wonders to ensure that best practices are implemented consistently and confidently at the bedside.

It is impossible to sustain, enhance, and advance the practice of nursing if retention is not prioritized, permitting the

development of skills, knowledge, and confidence in members of the workforce. This transcends the practice setting and applies to academia as well. Summers (2017) reviews the importance of mentorship regarding retention as applicable to nursing faculty: “...programs with formal mentor support, clear direction about role expectation, and the opportunity to observe effective teaching with ongoing feedback on performance for new educators, are essential if academic organizations want to retain competent and effective nursing faculty” (p. 265). If mentorship programs are not active to support retention, they absolutely should be considered as these partnerships have the potential to create profound change, improve nurse satisfaction, and ultimately lead to a more confident, competent, and content workforce.

“Mentorship can create an environment for continuous improvement, self-discovery, attainable goals, improved job and career satisfaction, and