

New Hampshire Nurses Association Position on the Requirement of Bachelor's Degree in Nursing (BSN) for Continued Practice

The New Hampshire Nurses Association recognizes that the nurse of the future is the Baccalaureate Nurse. It is the position of the New Hampshire Nurses Association that there will be a voluntary commitment to advancement of nursing education beyond the Associate Degree in Nursing, and that this commitment helps to ensure quality patient outcomes. The choice to pursue continued education should be supported and encouraged by educators and employers of Registered Nurses. It is recommended that newly licensed nurses set a goal of a Bachelor's Degree in nursing within ten years of licensure.

NHNA has taken this position in recognition of statements of the stances of national professional nursing organizations. In 2008 ANA House of Delegates resolved, "that the American Nurses Association support initiatives to require registered nurses (RNs) to obtain a baccalaureate degree in nursing within ten years after initial licensure, exempting (grand-parenting) those individuals who are licensed or enrolled as a student in a nursing program at the time legislation is enacted; and be it further resolved, that the American Nurses Association advocates for and promotes legislative and educational activities that support advanced education in nursing."(O'Brien & Gural, 2008)

This declaration is consistent with the more recent May 2010 position of the Tri-Council for Nursing - a long-standing collaboration between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Nurses Association, American Organization of Nurse Executives, and National League for Nursing (<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Education/pdf/TricouncilEdStatement.pdf>). In this consensus position "The Tri-Council organizations agree that a more highly educated nursing profession is no longer a preferred future; it is a necessary future in order to meet the nursing needs of the nation and to deliver effective and safe care." Finally this initiative is in alignment with specialty nurses associations such as the National Association of School Nurses.

NHNA encourages a collaborative, voluntary effort among key stakeholders with the goal of providing quality nursing care to the citizens of New Hampshire.

The position is based on the following:

- It encourages a culture of excellence in which nurses seek continued education with the support of employers and educators. It is recognized that excellence in the ever changing health care environment necessitates strengthening RN leadership and inter-disciplinary collaborative competencies through life long learning.
- Research has demonstrated that educational advancement improves patient outcomes through the use of evidence based practice and critical thinking. Educational advancement supports a culture of professional credibility and interdisciplinary respect from health care professionals who already recognized the value of advanced education.
- It will take a commitment by RNs, educators and employers for educational advancement to become a reality. Continuing clear and consistent communication regarding the value of baccalaureate level education in the associate degree academic setting is necessary in fostering a professional ethic of lifelong learning. Each practice setting will be challenged with mapping strategies designed to create and sustain an environment in which RN educational advancement is valued and rewarded. Furthermore, to support this transition, there must be ongoing academic and clinical partnerships that seek solutions to the problem of potential barriers to furthering one's education.

- Concern that legislation or regulation of advancement in nursing education will contribute to the nursing shortage or strain existing BS programs is unfounded. Currently 87.7 % (13,562) of the licensed registered nurses in New Hampshire (15,468) are employed in nursing with RN vacancy rates reported at less than 4% by the New Hampshire Hospital Association. While access to BSN programs may be limited in some areas of the country a wide array of opportunities in New Hampshire, including online education, offer creative solutions for completing the degree.

Two-thirds of nurses in New Hampshire are graduates of Associate Degree Programs. The New Hampshire Nurses Association encourages Associate Degree Programs to continue to work with colleges and universities to provide seamless access to advanced education. Furthermore, we look for employers to find creative solutions that afford nurses within practice settings the opportunity to achieve the goal of advanced education in nursing. Together, this collaborative effort will enable nurses to practice as full partners on multidisciplinary teams, increase professional satisfaction, and improve health care outcomes. Supporting and facilitating voluntary advancement of nursing education beyond the ADN will position New Hampshire Nurses as leaders in the profession of nursing.

References:

O'Brien, L., & Gural, L. (2008, June 27). Educational Advancement for Registered Nurses. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Nurses Association 2008 House of Delegates. Washington, DC

Educational advancement of registered nurses:

A consensus position: A policy statement from the Tri-Council for Nursing:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), American Nurses Association (ANA), American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE), National League for Nursing (NLN). Retrieved from:

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Education/pdf/TricouncilEdStatement.pdf>

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