



## What is Breakthrough to Nursing?

The goal of NSNA's Breakthrough to Nursing Project is to increase the number of qualified students enrolled in and graduated from nursing schools. The project was started in 1965 to address NSNA's concerns about:

- The adequacy of health care services for minority group members.
- The need to increase the number of minority group health care providers.
- The need to provide opportunities for minority nursing students to develop leadership skills.
- The need for the nursing education system to be more responsive to the needs of the minority group students.

The Breakthrough to Nursing Project received federal funding from 1971-1977. At that time, the House of Delegates directed NSNA to continue an active leadership role in the recruitment and retention of ethnic people of color and men into schools of nursing, in accordance with NSNA bylaws and policies.

The program has been adapted in many ways since its inception. NSNA has reaffirmed the need for Breakthrough to Nursing by expanding the program's scope to include: recognizing the needs of the physically challenged nursing student (1982 House of Delegates); sensitization to the health care needs of the diverse ethnic groups nursing students and nurses serve (1974 House of Delegates); increasing the number of men entering nursing programs (1969 House of Delegates); recognizing the needs of economically and educationally disadvantaged nursing students (1985 House of Delegates); recognizing and addressing the needs of the non-traditional student (1995 Board of Directors) and general recruitment and retention (1986 Board of Directors).

The concerns of Breakthrough to Nursing continue to be relevant today. Recruitment/retention, minority recruitment, the number of men in the profession, young students, non-traditional students, and the need to support all enrolled in professional nursing programs are goals of BTN. Recruitment of young people into the profession is critical due to the aging of the nursing workforce. Effectiveness of the Breakthrough to Nursing Project seems due, in part, to the peer relationships that can be established between nursing students and other students. In recent years the project has been expanded to the recruitment of all qualified individuals into nursing.

In order to provide direction for the Breakthrough to Nursing Project, a mission statement in keeping with NSNA's mission statement has been developed.

## Getting a Breakthrough to Nursing Committee Started

The mission of the Breakthrough to Nursing Project is to:

- organize, represent, and mentor students preparing for initial licensure as registered nurses, as well as those nurses enrolled in baccalaureate completion programs, in becoming practitioners sensitive to the cultural diversity that exists in our society;
- promote the development of the skills needed to be responsible, accountable members of the nursing profession who respect the differences and similarities between people;

- advocate for high quality care, utilizing the principles of transcultural nursing;
- facilitate the development of peer support systems, which enhance recruitment and retention within the nursing profession.

To implement the project at the school level, a core group of 5-10 committee members is needed. The committee composition may be as follows: Chair (NSNA member) and 2-3 additional NSNA members; faculty representatives; representatives from the nursing school, college or university recruitment staff; local hospital recruiters if possible. These individuals should be willing to commit themselves to work on the project for at least a year.

The first task is to gather information about the nursing workforce and nursing school admissions/enrollments/graduations and pre-nursing students in the area; length and types of nursing programs; waiting lists; and financial assistance available.

Committee members (one student should always be on the field visits since youngsters will relate well to someone who is in school) can then go out to speak with potential nursing students. Meetings can be arranged through local junior and senior high school counselors, churches, boys and girls clubs, or other community contacts. Another target population is “undeclared” college students in your own college or university. Information provided to junior and senior high school students should include:

- What nursing is really about (i.e. the values of nurses and nursing’s service to society);
- Career opportunities in nursing;
- The academic prerequisites and grades required for nursing school admission;
- Personal attributes needed for professional nursing (i.e., good interpersonal and communication skills; like to work with people, etc).

Interested students can then be contacted individually by nursing students. Follow-up should be continued with these students until they are enrolled into nursing school or decide that nursing is not what they want.

As an incentive, NSNA offers a scholarship program that includes scholarships for ethnic people of color. In addition, awards are given for projects conducted by NSNA school and state constituents.\* The awards are presented during the Awards Ceremony at the Annual NSNA Convention.

The Breakthrough to Nursing Project should play a major role in every state chapter and school association. BTN has proven to be one of the major avenues by which nursing students can work in a unified way to improve the quality of nursing care given to diverse cultural groups, thus making nursing a more visible and attractive profession. The BTN Project can play a major role to interest student in nursing during the growing nursing shortage.

## **BTN Tools**

### **Nursing—The Ultimate Adventure Video**

The NSNA has a new video available for use by BTN Committees. Nursing—The Ultimate Adventure, is free of charge to all schools that have official NSNA chapters and BTN committees

(student members of the BTN committee must be NSNA members). The video (10 minutes long) is designed to interest teenagers in a nursing career. Informative literature is provided to give to students after they view the video. Please visit [www.nсна.org](http://www.nсна.org) click [ProgramActivities/Breakthrough to Nursing](#) for more information or download the order form here: [www.nсна.org/OnlineOrderForms.aspx](http://www.nсна.org/OnlineOrderForms.aspx).

### **NSNA's Career Center**

NSNA's Career Center on [www.nсна.org](http://www.nсна.org) is for both students interested in a nursing career and for nursing students planning their careers. Junior and senior high school students can find general information about nursing careers and directly access nursing school web sites. The Discover Nursing page includes:

### **Nursing—The Career for a Lifetime**

This inspirational program presents accomplished nurses sharing their career journeys and new nurses revealing their dream careers. The DVD includes a main feature with bonus tracks on a variety of nursing career paths.

### **Nursing—The Ultimate Adventure**

Information for junior and high school students interested in going to nursing school. Information about nursing opportunities, how to apply for nursing school, and educational pathways for nursing education.

### **Is Nursing for You?**

If you are a licensed practical nurse, nurses' aid, working in an allied health field or want a second career...nursing may be for you.

### **Realities of the Current Job Market**

The National League for Nursing and the National Student Nurses' Association are keenly aware of the entry level jobs situation for new graduates. This resource helps prepare you for a very competitive job market.

### **Tips on Being a Mom and a Nursing Student**

Article from *Imprint* magazine.

### **Juggling Nursing School and Family**

Article from *Imprint* Magazine.

### **Nursing Schools**

Direct connect to the web sites of nursing schools to explore the entrance requirements, program of study, degree earned and much more.

### **Occupational Outlook for Registered Nurses**

Provides excellent information about the nature of nursing work, working conditions, qualifications, employment outlook and earnings.

## Career Prep

Learn about preparing for licensure as a registered nurse.

# Guidelines to Establish a BTN Project

The following guidelines will assist school and state constituents to establish and maintain a Breakthrough to Nursing Project:

1. The first step is for school chapters and state associations to appoint a BTN chairperson who will be responsible for implementing the project. The BTN chairperson's role and responsibilities should be included in the association's bylaws to insure continuity from year to year.
2. Obtain faculty support for the project. Many schools have faculty committees that address student recruitment and retention issues. Be sure there is a student representative (preferably the BTN chair) on this committee.
3. To implement the project at the state level, establish a BTN committee of 10-12 members. Invite schools in your state's regional chapters to appoint an NSNA member and/or a faculty representative to serve on the committee. Invite the state association of hospital nurse recruiters or recruiters who are supportive of your state association to participate on the committee. The state hospital association can assist with these contacts. These individuals should be willing to commit themselves to work on the project for at least a year. Find out what the nursing staff needs are on the state level. This information is available from your state hospital association. Establish the admissions/enrollments/graduation trends for nursing schools in your state. This information is available from your state board of nursing.
4. To implement the project at the school level, a core group of 5-10 committee members is needed. The committee composition may be as follows: Chair (NSNA member) and 2-3 additional NSNA members; faculty representatives; representatives from the nursing school, college or university recruitment staff; local hospital recruiters if possible. These individuals should be willing to commit themselves to work on the project for at least a year.
5. Monitor BTN activities on the national, state, and school levels by communicating regularly with other BTN representatives.
6. Keep abreast of current nursing school enrollment, quality of the applicants, and graduation statistics in your school and region to assess the project for its effectiveness and needed modifications. Compare these statistics against the baseline data collected when the project was started.
7. Search for sources of funding for the project; provide creative incentives for participants.
8. Submit articles to school and state newsletters to inform others of the BTN Project's accomplishments and upcoming activities; post a "What is Breakthrough to Nursing?" flyer on the bulletin board.
9. Contact local radio and television stations and arrange interviews about nursing.
10. Contact local newspapers and offer information about nursing. Write letters to the editor about nursing opportunities in your community.
11. Before leaving office, leave a list of guidelines and recommendations for the incoming BTN chairperson and committee members.

12. Submit a bylaws amendment at the state convention to have the BTN director included in the state bylaws as an elected or appointed position on the Board of Directors.
13. In addition to seeking potential nursing students at junior and senior high schools, look for other groups of people who may be interested in a nursing career. Focus especially on the populations targeted by BTN. Use your imagination to plan projects appropriate to them.
14. Network with other area schools to share project and promotional ideas.

## Ideas for BTN Activities

1. Set achievable short term BTN goals that can be accomplished in one year. Work with faculty and recruitment staff to set long-range goals.
2. Describe BTN's purpose in concrete terms.
3. Ask NSNA headquarters for assistance in planning and implementing projects.
4. Recruit for nursing in general, as well as focusing on underrepresented populations in nursing.
5. Work with your school or state Image of Nursing Committee to promote a positive image of the nursing profession to the public.
6. BTN chairpersons can get together during the annual NSNA Annual Convention or the MidYear Career Planning Conference to share activities and ideas. Time is set aside at both meetings for this purpose.
7. Organize a state or chapter level contest for BTN.
8. Make plans so that your BTN projects have continuity from year to year.
9. Write junior and senior high school principals and counselors to inform them of the nature, purpose and goals of the BTN project; propose a role that each school may play in implementing the project.
10. Offer involvement in high school career days.
11. Have nursing students write letters to their high school guidance counselors letting them know how much they are learning in nursing school and to refer potential nursing students to them if they want to talk to a nursing student about what nursing school is like.
12. Update guidance counselors about nursing and requirements for entrance into nursing school.
13. Contact a local guidance counselor association and ask to be placed on the agenda for one of their meetings—show the BTN video.
14. Contact school nurses to see how they can become involved.
15. Cooperate with local hospitals and community nursing agencies to have a career day for junior and high school students at their facility.
16. Have a BTN fundraiser to provide funds for tutoring students with academic needs.
17. Focus on retention as well as recruitment of students, i.e. establishment study groups and peer support groups.
18. Encourage minority students to get involved in BTN projects and to serve as role models and mentors for other students.
19. Think of creative ways to recruit "second-career" people into nursing. Increase the involvement of community agencies, clinics and hospitals in the BTN project.

## Breakthrough to Nursing Social Media

The use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) will be instrumental in taking BTN to new heights. Establishing separate social media pages made designated solely for BTN initiatives will help forward the movement of the BTN mission. By doing so, this will bring BTN to resources that are easily accessible and frequently viewed by students.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NSNAincBTN/>

Instagram: @nsna\_breakthroughtonursing

Twitter: @NSNA\_btn

For information about becoming an official constituent of the National Student Nurses Association, refer to *Getting the Pieces to Fit*, available at [www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org) (click on Publications and download) or write or call NSNA for a free copy.

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## Breakthrough to Nursing: Interest Form

If you already have a Breakthrough to Nursing Committee, please select "Send BTN Contact Info" so that we may send relevant BTN information to the appropriate person. If you do not have a BTN Committee and want to start one, select "Request Info."

**Submit BTN Interest Form [HERE](#)**