

National Student Nurses' Association, Inc.
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NSNA White Paper: Health Care Reform

Introduction

The National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) is an active participant in the movement to improve health care. This paper illuminates NSNA's core values, history and policies that relate to the reformation of health care in this country. Internal documents reviewed for this process include the [NSNA Code of Ethics Part I](#) and [Part II and the Interpretive Statements](#) (NSNA, 2009), the NSNA Bylaws, and NSNA Resolutions passed by the House of Delegates 1998 - 2010. NSNA's history, the current policy positions of professional nurses as outlined by the *American Nurses Association (ANA) Health System Reform Agenda* (2008), and the National League for Nursing (NLN) position statements on nursing education reform (2003, 2005) were also considered.

NSNA has identified seven health care reform elements:

- Access to Health Care for All Citizens with Special Programs for Vulnerable Groups
- Emphasis on Primary Care
- Patient Centered Health Care that Fosters Consumer Responsibility and Informed Decision Making
- Improved Health Care Outcomes and Effectiveness
- Safe Work Environments
- Nursing Recruitment and Education
- Utilization of the Healthcare Workforce

These elements, from the perspective of student nurses, are vital to improving health care in this nation. It should be noted that these seven elements are aligned with the four most critical principles of health care reform outlined by American Nurses' Association access to health care, the quality of health care, the cost of health care, and the health care workforce (ANA, 2008). They also support many of the points the NLN makes regarding the reformation of nursing education.

The delivery of nursing services is dependent on well-prepared registered nurses who are today's student nurses. Creating a system in which all citizens have access to quality care, health promotion and illness prevention services and information, empowers individuals and communities to make evidence-based decisions. This can be achieved by simultaneously creating a safe work environment for health care professionals, addressing the demand for future nurses and quality nursing education, and utilizing the registered nurse workforce in the most effective ways possible.

Health Care as a Right

The preamble to NSNA's Bylaws states: "we believe every citizen has a right to the highest quality of health care ([NSNA Bylaws, 2007](#))." Our current health care system does not ensure this right for everyone, leaving many, including our most vulnerable populations, without available health care coverage. Therefore, NSNA supports a universal system that ensures that

all citizens can access essential health care services.

NSNA Code of Ethics and Health Care Reform

The NSNA Code of Ethics establishes a high standard of behavior, guided by the ideals and values expected of students who participate in NSNA (NSNA Code of Ethics, 2009). It states that students have a responsibility to facilitate change in health care delivery and advance the profession of nursing through various channels. Health care reform policy is one of these channels; therefore, it is NSNA's responsibility to advocate for positive change throughout the reform process.

The [NSNA Code of Ethics](#) also clearly outlines the ethical duty of students to advocate for the right of *all patients* (2009). [NSNA's policy](#) on the elimination of discrimination, (*Getting the Pieces to Fit*, p. 30) is "to work toward the elimination of discrimination wherever it affects students and to work with others in ending discriminatory practices wherever they exist, but particularly in the health care industry (NSNA Policies, 2009). Therefore, it is NSNA's responsibility to advocate for each citizen's right to health care regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, lifestyle, disability, or economic status.

NSNA Purpose/Function and Health Care Reform

NSNA aids in the development of future nurses, creating accountable nurse leaders that are responsible "for the health care of people in all walks of life ([NSNA Bylaws, 2007](#))." Part of NSNA's primary function is to inform nursing students about health care reform through education about legislation and policy development. This is achieved through programmatic activities and collaboration with other professional organizations. NSNA also promotes community activities to improve health care and address the influence of social issues as they relate to wellness and illness.

Health Care Reform and the NSNA House of Delegates

At the annual [NSNA Business Meeting](#) the House of Delegates, composed of student nurse leaders from around the nation, debate and vote on [resolutions](#) that become NSNA policy. Listed below are the resolutions passed between 1998 and 2010 that relate to health care reform. These resolutions relate to at least one of the seven health care reform elements deemed essential by student nurses.

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Access to Health Care for all citizens, with Special Programs for Vulnerable Groups:

Since NSNA's inception in 1952, NSNA members have advocated for equal access to affordable, quality health care for all. In 1992, the NSNA House of Delegates unanimously endorsed *Nursing's Agenda for Health Care Reform*, supporting these ideals as a right for all citizens. Through continued leadership and professional development, engaged debate, and adoption of the resolutions represented below in the NSNA House of Delegates, student nurses have added their voice to help shape the future of health care and improve nursing services across the continuum of care. The following policies reflect a keen awareness of the role of professional nursing in policy development.*

1998

In Support of Continued Universal Screening, Proper Documentation, and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence

1999

In Support of Patient Protection Legislation

In Support of the Education of Americans Regarding the Children's Health Insurance Program

In Support of the Full-Time Presence of an On-Site Registered Nurse Within all Elementary and Secondary Schools

2000

In Support of Nurses' Participation in Patients' End of Life Care

In Support of Promoting Health Insurance Coverage for Contraception

2001

In Support of Increased Access to and Development of Improved Drug Treatment Programs for Substance Abusing Pregnant Women

2002

In Support of Achieving a School Nurse-to-student Ratio of at least 1:750 in Every School

In Support of Implementing a Public Health Strategy for Suicide Prevention Among Teens and Young Adults

2003

In Support of Raising Awareness of the Plight of the Uninsured and Demonstrating Broad Support for Action on the Issue

In Support of Protection for Volunteerism by Medical Personnel Caring for the Underserved and Uninsured

2005

In Support of Comprehensive Mental Health Parity Legislation

2006

In Support of the Wisewoman Expansion Act to Provide Low-Income, Uninsured Women with Health Services to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease

2007

In Support of Federal Legislation for Life-Time Immunosuppressive coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients

2008

In Support of A Continuum of Medical Care for the Homeless in Order to Prevent Patient Dumping

In Support of Legislation Against Genetic Discrimination in the Workplace and for Insurance Purposes

In Support of Increased Access to Wound Ostomy Continence Nurses in the Perioperative Periods for Ostomy Patients

In Support of Increasing Healthcare Resources for American Veterans Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Their Families Dealing with the Physical and Psychological Injuries of Returning Veterans
In Support of Nationally Recognized End-of-Life Orders Including Advance Directives
In Support of Increased Awareness and Education about Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs in Order to Promote Increased Program Development in the United States

2009

In Support of Increasing Awareness of Mental Health Disparities in Youth
In Support of Increased Collaboration with Child Life Specialists
In Support of Increasing Awareness and Evaluate Competency of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Care

2010

In Support of Increasing Culturally Competent Education about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Individuals

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Increased Focus on Primary Care and Prevention:

1998

In Support of Legislation that Acknowledges Respite Care as a Reimbursable Health Care Service for Alzheimer's Patients Cared for at Home
In Support of the Prevention of Lyme Disease Through Increased Education and Awareness
In Support of Early Screening for Type II Diabetes Mellitus

2002

In Support of Improving Coordination and Consistent delivery of Preventative Services and Meeting Health Care Needs for Foster Children

2003

In Support of the Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) for Patients with Severely Disabling Mental Illnesses
In Support of Increased Education and Awareness of Health Care Professionals and Diabetic Patients Regarding the Need for Assessment and Care of the Diabetic Foot

2004

In Support of Legislation Aimed at Increased Education on the Consequences of a High Calorie, High Fat Diet
In Support of Education and Legislation that Promotes the Benefits of Breastfeeding
In Support of Promoting Sun Safety Measures for Infants, to Reduce the Risk of Skin Cancer

2005

In Support of Shaken Baby Syndrome Education in High School Health, Wellness, and Parenting Classes
In Support of Increasing Education and Awareness for Parents of Children with Asthma to Reduce of Hospital Emergency Room Visits

2006

In Support of Tobacco Free Nurses, Nursing Students, and medical Campuses
In Support of Increased Awareness and Education Regarding Prevention of Recreational Water Illnesses

2007

In Support of Education the Public About Education/Prevention of Unintentional Injuries/Deaths in Children under Age 14
In Support of Allowing Condoms in All Adult Correctional Facilities for the Purpose of Reducing the Spread of HIV Among Inmates
In Support of Increasing Awareness and Prevention Human Papilloma Virus

2008

In Support of Increased Awareness of Oral Assessment and Hygiene and the Need for Appropriate Dental Referrals by Nurses
In Support of the Federal Government Implementing a Community-Based Disposal Initiative for Contaminated Medical Waste Including all Needles, Syringes, and other "Sharps."
In Support of Advocating the use of a Helmet for any Person Operating or Riding a Motorcycle on Public Roadways
In Support of Increased Education about Eating Disorder Awareness and Prevention

2009

In Support of Early Recognition and Intervention Programs in Healthcare Facilities to Prevent Respiratory and Cardiac Arrest
In Support of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Education
In Support of Herpes Zoster Vaccination of Adults Over 60 Years of Age
In Support of Increasing Education, Awareness and Identification of Preventable Pressure Ulcers
In Support of Prevention, Awareness, and Nationalized Regulatory Standards for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus
In Support of Awareness and Prevention of Elder Abuse

2010

In Support of Increased Awareness of Public Health Nursing and Population-Based Health Initiatives
In Support of Increased Primary Care Health Access Among the Geriatric Population

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Patient Centered Health Care that Fosters Consumer Responsibility and Informed Decision Making (Consumer Education):**1998**

In Support of Promoting the use of Alternatives to Physical and Chemical Restraints

1999

In Support of Promoting Awareness, Education and Program Implementation to Prevent School Violence
In Support of Pediculosis Control Programs
In Support of Increased Awareness and Education of Anophthalmia and Microphthalmia
In Support of Standardization of Medication labeling for all FDA Approved Medications

In Support of Increased Education for the Public and Health Care Professionals About Urinary Incontinence

2000

In Support of Increased Awareness and Education of Scleroderma

In Support of Education on the Prevention and the Consequences of Antibiotic Resistance

2001

In Support of Senior Fall Prevention Education

In Support of Increased Awareness and Education of the Diabetes Type II Pandemic and Diabetes Management

2002

In Support of Increasing “Healthy Heart Living” Education to Children Prior to Adolescence

In Support of Osteoporosis education for School Aged Clients

In Support of Education and Awareness Regarding the National epidemic of Increased Obesity in Children and Adolescents

In Support of Public Awareness of Immunizations Needs Among Older Adults

2003

In Support of Sun Protection Education for School Aged Clients

In Support of Increased Awareness and Education about the West Nile Virus

2004

In Support of Increased Education, Prevention and Increased Awareness of Screening for HIV/AIDS Among At-Risk Clients Over 50 Years of Age

In Support of Increased Awareness about the Consequences of Binge Drinking Among College Students

In Support of Raising Awareness of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the Aftermath of a Crisis

2005

In Support of Increased Research, Awareness, and Education about Celiac Disease

In Support of Education and Awareness Regarding the National Epidemic of Metabolic Syndrome in the United States

2006

In Support of Education and Awareness to Reduce the Risk for Injury Resulting from Falls in Healthcare Settings in the United States

In Support of Increased Education and Awareness for Health Care Professionals and Women Regarding the Use and Effects of Methamphetamine During Pregnancy

In Support of Increased Awareness and Education Regarding Gestational Diabetes

2008

In Support of Increased Awareness of and Evidence-Based Research on Bipolar Disorder in the Pediatric Population

In Support of Health Literacy Education

2010

In Support of Increasing the Amount of Healthy Food Options and Providing for More Informed Choices in Health Care Facilities

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Improved Health Care Outcomes and Effectiveness:

1998

In Support of Nurses Strengthening Their Role as Advocates for the Planning and Humane Implementation of Care

In Support of Enhancing Communication with Ventilator Dependant Patients

1999

In Support of Increasing Education Regarding the use of Insulin Pumps and Other Innovative Therapies for the Diabetic Client

In Support of Increased Education for Health Care Providers Regarding Elder Abuse

2000

In Support of Aggressive Pain Management in Substance Abusers

In Support of Increased Awareness of the Harmful Effects of the Bacterial Load Found on Artificial Nails

2001

In Support of Pain as the 5th Vital Sign

In Support of Scheduled Medication Administration for Pain Management in the Terminally Ill

2003

In Continued Support of Awareness and Education about the Importance of Routine Screening for Domestic Violence Upon Admission in all Hospital Settings

In Continued Support of Improving the Safety of Older Adults in all Healthcare Settings Through a Reduction in the Use of Physical Restraints

2004

In Support of the Use of Alcohol-Based Hand rubbing Solutions in Conjunction with Regular Soap and Water Hand washing by Healthcare Workers in the Clinical Setting

In Support of Routine Screening Regarding the use of Complimentary and Alternative Medicines During the Initial Patient Assessment

2005

In Support of Education Healthcare Professionals about Developing and Maintaining Current Healthcare Advance Directive

2007

In Support of Improved Evidence-Based Practice Education and Further Research Regarding the Effects of Pain in the Neonate Population.

In Support of Increased Awareness and Education of Health Care Professionals Regarding Timely Referrals to Hospice Care for All Terminally Ill Patients

In Support of Promoting Early Assessment of Alcohol Dependence in Patients in the Acute Care Setting to Decrease the Risk of Alcohol Withdrawal Symptoms

2008

In Support of Integrating Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE) Systems into Hospital Settings

In Support of Universal HIV Testing of Pregnant Women with Patient Notification (Opt-out Screening) as a Routine Component of Prenatal Care

2009

In Support of Evidence-Based Nursing Practice

In Support of Electronic Health Records: Enhancing Patient Safety

In Support of Increasing Awareness for Standardized Patient Care Hand-off

2010

In Support of Increasing Awareness and Advocacy for the Priority Patient Safety Areas from the Institute of Medicine (IOM)

In Support of Increasing Awareness of Mental Health Care Treatment Outcomes

In Support of Increasing Awareness for Postpartum Depression Screening

NSNA Resolutions in Support of a Safe Work Environment for Health Care Providers:**1998**

In Support of Instituting an Exposure Incident Policy for all Nursing Programs in the United States of America

1999

In Support of Safer Needle Devices

2002

In Support of Increased Education and Awareness of Collective Bargaining and Workplace Advocacy Programs

In Support of Whistleblower Protection for Nurses

In Support of Mandatory Patient: Nurse Staffing Ratios to Maximize Patient Safety and Quality of Care, and Minimize Professional Burnout in Practicing Nurses

2004

In Support of Education about various Models for Assessing Continued Nursing Competence

2005

In Support of the American Nurses Association "Handle with Care Campaign"

In Support of Increased Awareness regarding the Effects of Shift Work on Nursing Performance and Driving While Sleep Deprived

2006

In Support of Professional Workplace Culture and Decreasing Horizontal Violence

In Support of Increased State and Federal Regulation of Mandatory Overtime for Nurses to Reduce Fatigue-Related Nursing Errors and Increase Patient Safety in the Hospital Setting

2007

In Support of Improving the Nurse-Physician Relationship

2008

In Support of the American Nurses Association “Safe Staffing Saves Lives” Campaign

2010

In Support of Increased Education in Self-Care Awareness for Nursing Students and Nurses

In Support of Management of Assaultive Behavior Against Health Care Workers

In Support of Policy Development and Increased Funding for Research on Lateral Violence in Nursing

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Nursing Recruitment and Education:

2000

In Support of Enhanced Recruitment Efforts Beginning at the Elementary School Level to Compensate for the Escalating Nursing Shortage

2001

In Support of Increased Government Funding for Nursing Education to Prepare Students for RN Licensure; and to Further Support Government Funding for Nursing Faculty Development

In Support of Lowering the Student to Faculty Ratio in the Acute Care Setting

2003

In Support of Rectifying High School and New College Students’ Misconceptions/Stereotypes About the Nursing Profession in Order to Increase Recruitment into the Profession

In Support of Addressing the Nursing Shortage Through Recruitment and Retention of Men into the Nursing Profession

2004

In Support of Mentoring Middle, Junior High and High School Students with an Interest in the Nursing Profession

2005

In Support of Increased Awareness of the Shortage of and Need for Nurse Educators

2006

In Support of Increased Advocacy for Improved Preceptor Programs to Create a Robust Workforce Environment for the Nursing Profession

2007

In Support of Increased Advocacy, Research, and Education for Nursing Students

2008

In Support of the Inclusion of Clinical Nurse Preceptorships in the Clinical Learning Environment

In Support of National Standardized Curricula for Nurse Residency Programs

2009

In Support of Interdisciplinary Education

In Support of Utilizing Recent Federal Stimulus Monies Toward Nursing Residency Programs

NSNA Resolutions in Support of Utilization of the Healthcare Workforce:

1999

In Support of the Concept of Mutual Recognition Models for Multistate Nursing Licensure
In Support of Nursing Research and Increased Funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research at the National Institutes of Health

2003

In Support of Standardization of Education and Training of Unlicensed Assistant Personnel (UAP) who are Under the Supervision and Delegation Authority of Registered Nurses within each State Nationwide.

2006

In Support of the Establishment of Protocols for Disaster Relief Guiding the Scope of Practice for Student Nurses and the Collection and Distribution of Donations
In Support of Education Mobility of Registered Nurses

2007

In Support of Increased Awareness and Inclusion of Nursing Students in the Implementation of State and Federal Influenza Pandemic Response Plans

2008

In Support of Rewriting the Language of the Current Good Samaritan Laws to Cover all Licensed Healthcare Personnel Responding to Emergencies and/or Operating Automatic External Defibrillators
In Support of Empowering the Role of the Chief Nurse Officer of the United States Public Health Service
In Support of Liability Protection for Healthcare Personnel During a Declared Disaster or State of Emergency

2009

In Support of Workforce Data Collection

Action

Now that health care reform has become a reality, NSNA has reached a unique opportunity to showcase the many roles of registered nurses. As the implementation of this important social legislation unfolds, the professional practice of future registered nurses will be impacted. NSNA, through its publications and programs, seeks to engage student nurses in the process of reform. Working with professional nursing and interdisciplinary organizations, consumers and policy-makers, NSNA will continue to foster the development of student nurses who are well prepared to be at the decision-making table.

Collaborative Engagement

Student nurses are essential to the nursing community and it is imperative that NSNA be engaged in decisions related to the implementation of national health care reform. In 2009, NSNA signed on to [The Nursing Community Letter on Health Care Reform](#) and continues to

support the [Cover the Uninsured Initiative](#) as well. NSNA has also joined [Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief \(ANSR\)](#), a coalition of nursing and other organizations to secure Title VIII funding for nursing workforce development. This white paper is intended to be a dynamic dialogue to reflect the impact that nursing students make through their involvement in NSNA.

*The full text of NSNA's resolutions for the past years are available on www.nsna.org under the Publications tab.

Additional Resources

- American Nurses Association (2008), [ANA's Health System Reform Agenda](#)
- American Nurses Association (2009). [ANA's Social Policy Statement](#), 2010 Revised in press, anticipated release date May, 2010)
- Fetters Andersen, C. (1999) *Nursing Student to Nursing Leader: The Critical Path to Leadership Development*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers, pp. 3-15, 305-315, 325-340.
- Mancino, D. J. (2002). *Fifty Years of the National Student Nurses' Association*. New York: NSNA.
- National League for Nursing Position Statement (2005). [Transforming Nursing Education](#),
- National League for Nursing Position Statement (2003). [Innovation in Nursing Education](#).
- National Student Nurses' Association [Code of Ethics Part I](#) and [Part II and Interpretive Statements](#) (2009)
- National Student Nurses' Association [Bylaws](#)
- National Student Nurses' Association [Resolutions Past 10 Years](#)