



## BREAKTHROUGH to Nursing

The Breakthrough to Nursing column presents ideas and perspectives about the importance of cultural diversity in nursing and general recruitment into nursing.

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### Nursing Students with Disabilities

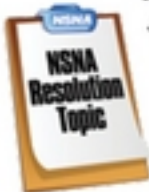
Breakthrough to Nursing (BTN) has actively been involved in recruiting and retaining students in nursing programs since 1965, focusing on underrepresented groups. When many people think of the minority groups within the nursing profession, some common groups that come to mind are men in nursing and various racial and ethnic minority groups. While these groups have been historically underrepresented, so have nurses with disabilities. However, over the past several years, the number of individuals with disabilities entering nursing school has increased. The 2011 NSNA House of Delegates adopted a Resolution in support of: "Promoting a Positive Image of Nursing Students with Disabilities." What exactly does this mean? Specifically, the Resolution states that NSNA is promote, "equality and fairness toward nursing students with disabilities including, but not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression and anxiety; and excluding

mental and/or physical disabilities that would jeopardize quality patient care."

I challenge you to help make a difference, large or small, in the public perception of nursing students with disabilities. Encourage individuals with disabilities to consider the profession of nursing, reminding them that there are many career options in the field of nursing that they might not have ever considered. This can be incorporated into Breakthrough to Nursing projects on both the local and state levels. Think about creating a mentor program for disabled students who are currently nursing students, want to become nurses, or are considering their options. Another example is a community outreach event like an open house designed to educate the community and individuals with disabilities about the different career opportunities in the profession of nursing and supportive resources. There are several resources available for disabled individuals considering

nursing as a career. There are professional membership organizations that advocate for disabled nurses, such as the National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities (NOND). NOND promotes equality for people with disabilities and chronic health conditions in nursing. NOND advocates for students with disabilities to gain equal access to nursing education programs. For more information on BTN and project resources, please visit the BTN page at [www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org). Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for help with projects at [BTNDirector@nsna.org](mailto:BTNDirector@nsna.org).

This article champions the 2011 Resolution, *In Support of Promoting a Positive Image of Nursing Students with Disabilities*.



Be sure to check out this issue's Alumni column on page 26, featuring past BTN leaders!