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American Association  
of Colleges of Nursing



**SCHOLAR ALUMNI TOOLKIT**

SEPTEMBER 2015



RESOURCES  
FOR SUCCESSFUL  
TRANSITION TO

**PROFESSIONAL  
NURSING  
PRACTICE**



# NCIN Scholar Alumni Toolkit: Resources for Successful Transition to Professional Practice

First Edition  
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# NCIN Scholar Alumni Toolkit

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## New Careers in Nursing

### Purpose

The *NCIN Scholar Alumni Toolkit* is designed to provide nursing students and newly licensed nurses with the necessary leadership development and mentoring resources for successful transition from the student to professional role, and to lay the groundwork for continued professional growth.

Benner's (1984) novice to expert model conceptually informed the toolkit development. She maintains that expert nurses develop skills and understanding of patient care over time through a sound educational base as well as a multitude of experiences. Support resources can provide insight into the experiences of newly licensed RNs as they begin their nursing career and help to guide them during this complex transition to practice.

### Objectives

The objectives of this toolkit are to:

- Offer information and advice throughout the job search process.
- Provide guidance for establishing and sustaining successful mentoring relationships.
- Suggest strategies for successful socialization into the nursing profession.
- Provide information for defining career goals and a path for professional growth.
- Guide pursuit of advanced education in nursing.
- Facilitate growth as a nurse leader.

### How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit contains information on selected topics identified in the literature and by nursing students, newly licensed RNs, faculty, and other experts as important for successful transition to professional nursing practice. Students and new nurses may find these resources to be helpful as they begin their nursing career, and as they continue to advance their education and professional growth.

### Reference

Benner, P. (1984). From novice to expert: *Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.







## Chapter 1

# The Job Search: Resources for a Successful Transition to Nursing Practice

*“I believe it is important to start the process early, during nursing school. Get to know about job fairs, recruitment events, and job interview days. Even if you have to go into the recruitment office and ask directly when the next recruitment event is for new grads, that would be great. Some events are not even advertised on the Web until a day or two before it happens. Also, it’s important to go to events by student and professional groups before graduating and/or while studying for NCLEX. I can’t tell you how many people I know missed out on six months or more of RN employment because they didn’t network just a couple times during school. In NYC, six months of being an RN is close to \$50,000. It’s worth it to network, even if it makes you uncomfortable.”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with resources for a successful transition to nursing practice by guiding you through the job search process.

### How do I begin the job search?

It is important to take time to reflect and to plan your strategy for finding your first job in nursing. Start early. Think about what type of position you would like to have and where you might like to work. If you find it overwhelming to think about going on job interviews while you are still in school or before you take the NCLEX-RN® exam, you can still get started by exploring your career options and laying the groundwork for when you begin applying for positions. No one is going to find a job for you. You need to be organized and systematic as you develop and implement your plan for your job search. It can easily take four to six months to find a job, so you will need to be systematic and patient. Stay positive and remain connected to faculty mentors. Do not doubt yourself, especially if it takes longer than six months to find the right position.

### What are the steps I need to take to find a job?

There is no one “formula” for success. You need to be mentally ready and motivated to move forward. While the job search can be stressful, try to reframe the process and become excited about the new opportunities that lie ahead!

#### Step 1: Know yourself

Reflect upon your personal and professional strengths. How would you like to grow both personally and professionally? Identify your interests. Think about where you would like to work and where you do not want to work.

**“ Be systematic and patient in your approach to the job search! ”**

## Step 2: Explore your options

Consider where you may like to work and what you might like to do. Take a broad look at possible positions in various settings. Look beyond hospitals and acute care. There may be new and exciting opportunities in primary care, clinics, community agencies, long-term care, rehabilitation, telehealth, and more (Fitzpatrick & Ea, 2011)! Be open to new possibilities. It is important not to limit yourself. By remaining flexible, you may find great satisfaction in a career path that you may not have previously considered.

Some new graduates know they want to work in a specialty area and there is nothing wrong with that choice. Contrary to what you may have heard, you do *not* need to do a year of medical-surgical or hospital nursing. Even if your goal is to work in a specialty area or a particular organization, be open to starting somewhere else if a great opportunity presents itself. You may want to consider “getting your foot in the door” at a hospital or agency by taking an open position that was not your first choice. This can help you to gain experience, or get an inside track when your “dream job” becomes available. You may find you like it and decide to stay in that role. You may even decide to take a different career path!

## Step 3: Do your homework and network

Start by exploring opportunities in every setting where you have had a clinical experience in school. Branch out and look beyond posted positions. Go on the Internet. Look at job postings in professional journals. Talk to faculty members, alumni, fellow students, and experienced nurses. Go to the Career Center. Some schools provide free resources for alumni after graduation. Attend career fairs and be prepared with your “elevator speech,” or quick pitch, that highlights your key qualifications and interests to potential employers in 30 seconds. Network at professional meetings and workshops. Go to the hospital, agency, or office and look around. Talk to recruiters as well as current and past employees to find out about available positions, job satisfaction, quality of care, and advancement opportunities. Reach out to personal contacts who might have connections to potential employers. Join a professional organization (see Chapter 6). Make connections. Network!

### TIP: Explore the following helpful career resources:

- **Purdue University Online Writing Lab Job Search Writing:**  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/>
- **SUNY Downstate Medical Center Career Resources:**  
<http://www.downstate.edu/publichealth/current-students/career-resources.html>
- **Advance Healthcare Network Student & New Grad Center:**  
<http://nursing.advanceweb.com/new-nurse-grads/default.aspx>
- **American Nurses Association (ANA) New RN Graduate Career Resources:**  
<http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Career-Center/Resources/New-RN-Graduate-Career-Resources.html>
- **Online networking through social media and job boards:**  
You need to get on LinkedIn! Create and maintain an updated professional profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/reg/join>. Explore sites such as [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com), [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com), and [www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com).

## TIP: Here are some organizational factors you may want to consider:

- **Setting:** Be open to exploring different types of organizations, agencies, or private practices.
- **Culture:** Get to know the organizational culture by reviewing their mission and vision statements, new initiatives, and strategic goals. Do these fit with your values and professional goals?
- **Magnet vs. non-Magnet hospitals:** While there are many excellent non-Magnet facilities, there may be some benefits to working in a Magnet hospital. These benefits may include improved patient safety and satisfaction as well as higher RN retention rates and job satisfaction. You can learn more about the Magnet Recognition Program and its potential benefits by going to the American Nurses Credentialing Center website at <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Magnet/ProgramOverview/WhyBecomeMagnet>.
- **Union vs. nonunion work environments:** There are pros and cons related to the unionization of nurses and the unlicensed assistive personnel with whom they work (Cherry, 2014). Nursing unions exist for the purpose of addressing goals related to employment issues, such as wages and working conditions (Cherry, 2014). The ANA supports the rights of nurses to choose whether or not to participate in collective bargaining (ANA, 2015). As previously mentioned, your assessment of the overall organizational culture will be important in your decision-making. In addition, you may want to ask these questions:
  - Are nurses and/or unlicensed assistive personnel unionized?
  - If so, what is the union to which they belong?
  - Is membership mandatory or voluntary?
- **Nurse residency programs:** A nurse residency program provides new graduates with didactic instruction and/or program activities along with precepted clinical experiences for an extended period of time (Norris, 2014). A residency program can help new graduates with the transition to professional practice and may vary from a few months to a full year. While these programs have primarily been implemented in acute care settings, you may begin to see more nurse residency programs in community agencies, long-term care facilities, and other settings as a result of the Institute of Medicine recommendations (IOM, 2010) and the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action*. To learn more, go to <http://campaignforaction.org/webinar/nursing-residency-programs-transition-practice-part-i>. For information on nurse residency programs accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, go to <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nurse-residency-program>.
- **Preceptorship programs:** Many agencies will provide preceptors for new graduate nurses. A preceptor will orient the new nurse to a specific practice area, assist in the socialization process, and provide instruction regarding skills (Norris, 2014). The assigned preceptor may be one consistent nurse or possibly a group of rotating nurses with or without preceptor training and experience. Find out the specifics for that agency, unit, or team.

- **Patient population:** You should research the local, regional, and state demographics for the patient population you will serve. Once you have these data, you might want to explore the cultural norms that may be relevant for these patient groups.
- **Jobs out-of-state:** If you are looking to find a job in another state, you can start by getting information online about employment opportunities, cost of living, transportation, demographics, and other factors. You may want to consider planning a weekend trip to see the area before applying for jobs, and especially before accepting an offer.

#### Step 4: Clean up your act on social media

Make sure all of your social media accounts look professional, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Employers may ask you for direct access to these accounts. Even if you refuse, there are strategies for indirect access, as privacy settings can often be bypassed.

#### TIP: Make certain that the photos and/or icons on your email and social media accounts look professional!

The ANA and National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) offer the following social media guidelines and resources for nurses. You must be an ANA member to access these and other useful resources. Professional membership fees are tax deductible and reduced rates are available for students.

- **ANA on Social Media:**  
<http://www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/AboutANA/Social-Media>
- **ANA Social Networking Principles Toolkit:**  
<http://www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/AboutANA/Social-Media/Social-Networking-Principles-Toolkit>
- **ANA Principles for Social Networking and the Nurse:**  
<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ThePracticeofProfessionalNursing/NursingStandards/ANAPrinciples/Principles-for-Social-Networking.pdf>
- **A Nurse's Guide to the Use of Social Media from the NCSBN:**  
[https://www.ncsbn.org/NCSBN\\_SocialMedia.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/NCSBN_SocialMedia.pdf)
- **NCSBN Social Media Guidelines for Nurses Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9FBEiZRnmo>

#### How do I create a résumé?

Your résumé should briefly and effectively communicate your educational, professional, and personal qualifications to your prospective employer to provide you with an opportunity for a job interview. Your résumé does NOT get you the job. Your resume should be clear, concise, and have consistent formatting throughout, with sufficient margins and spacing so it can be read quickly. You want your résumé to paint a strong picture of you and what you have to offer. Spell out all acronyms, unless they are widely known, e.g., CPR, NCLEX-RN®.

## What should be included on my résumé?

Design a heading for your résumé that catches your prospective employer's attention and looks professional. The heading should consist of your legal name, local and permanent addresses, phone number, and school email or professionally named personal email account.

**TIP: Make sure your voice-mail message sounds professional and the mailbox is not full so it can accept messages!**

A résumé is a brief summary of your education, employment history, and experiences that highlights your qualifications for the specific position for which you are applying (Purdue University, 2015). List your education, experience, and activities with dates in reverse chronological order—put the most recent first! Give brief descriptions, use strong action verbs, and include transferable skills to nursing and health care. Customer service experience, promoting teamwork, excellent communication skills, leadership roles, maintaining safety, and priority-setting abilities are important skills that should be highlighted (NYU, 2015b).

**TIP: You may include an objective, but only do so if it adds a meaningful perspective to your job search, e.g., desire to work in a specialty area.**

Organize your résumé with **topical headings** that convey your qualifications clearly and concisely, such as:

### ■ Education

- Schools of higher education attended with dates, degrees, and honors
- Special courses or study abroad if relevant
- May wish to include GPA if >3.0

### ■ Certifications & Licenses

- Spell out the name of the certification and/or license along with the appropriate body. Include expiration date(s) of all certifications and licenses.

Examples:

- American Heart Association Basic Life Support for Health Care Providers, CPR & AED (expires 8/31/16)
- Expected State of New York Registered Professional Nurse License: NCLEX-RN® Exam May 2016

**TIP: If you have not yet taken the NCLEX-RN® exam, include your expected test date.**

■ **Honors & Awards**

- Include academic and professional achievements, e.g., honors, awards, scholarships.

■ **Clinical Rotations**

- Include the agency, type of unit or rotation (if applicable), and semester.

**TIP: Make sure to use the correct name of the agency and apply to every agency where you had a clinical rotation!**

■ **Health-Related & Other Experiences**

- Highlight internships, jobs, and volunteer roles.

■ **Special Skills**

- List any special skills or experiences, including proficiency with special software or electronic medical records and specify them by name, e.g., Excel, EPIC.

■ **Languages**

- List the languages you speak and level of fluency, e.g., basic, intermediate, fluent.

**Should my résumé be limited to one page? Or, can it be two pages long?**

Limit your résumé to one page if possible, but do not overcrowd it so that it is hard to read (NYU, 2015b). Include only relevant details and save the additional information for your interview. If you have had significant and extensive experiences that are relevant to your job search, your résumé can be two pages. However, make sure the most important information is on the first page in case the employer does not read the second page.

**TIP: Résumé: Dos & Don'ts**

- Do proofread carefully.
- Do use consistent formatting.
- Do use *key words* found on the job posting.
- Do go to your Career Center to review your résumé.
- Do have others take a look at it.
- Do NOT have typos or grammatical errors.

“ **Your résumé gets your foot in the door...the interview gets you the job.** ”

- Do NOT crowd too much information on one page.
- Do NOT lie or exaggerate.
- Do NOT include the phrase “references available upon request.” This statement does not add any relevant information and takes up space.

## How do I keep my résumé current while job searching?

You can keep your résumé current by exploring health-care-related volunteer opportunities at places where you may or may not be interested in working. Even just a few hours volunteering at the American Red Cross, a local hospital, flu clinic, or community agency looks good on a résumé and provides you with additional experience. Continuing education is another way to keep your résumé current. If you belong to a professional organization, it may provide resources for continuing education opportunities in an area of interest (see Chapter 6).

If you are looking to work in a specialty area, you can strengthen your résumé by obtaining advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) or pediatric advanced life support (PALS) certification from the American Heart Association.

### ACLS certification:

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/HealthcareProviders/Advanced-CardiovascularLifeSupportACLS/Advanced-Cardiovascular-Life-Support-ACLS\\_UCM\\_001280\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/HealthcareProviders/Advanced-CardiovascularLifeSupportACLS/Advanced-Cardiovascular-Life-Support-ACLS_UCM_001280_SubHomePage.jsp)

### PALS certification:

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/HealthcareProviders/Pediatrics/Pediatric-Advanced-Life-Support-PALS\\_UCM\\_303705\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/HealthcareProviders/Pediatrics/Pediatric-Advanced-Life-Support-PALS_UCM_303705_Article.jsp)

## How do I write a cover letter?

Career Centers often have examples of cover letters posted on their websites. You should develop a basic template for your cover letter; but you will need to tailor your cover letter for each job opportunity. You want to convey your enthusiasm, say why you are interested in the position, and say why you are a good fit for the organization and the role.

The **cover letter** should be limited to one page consisting of a few paragraphs (NYU, 2015b):

- **Introduction:** First, describe the position and how you heard about it. Then state the current nursing major, degree, and graduation date from your school.
- **Body:** This is where you sell yourself and you make your sales pitch! Discuss your specific strengths and align them with the job requirements, mission, goals, initiatives, and culture of the organization. Describe how your past and current experiences have prepared you for the specific role. You can include information regarding your previous degree(s) and make sure to connect how your background has prepared you and/or influenced your decision to become a nurse.

- **Closing:** In this final paragraph, you should politely request an interview to further discuss your qualifications, thank the employer for consideration, and mention that you look forward to future correspondence.

## How do I ask for references and letters of recommendation?

You will likely need to provide a list of three to five people who are willing to act as a reference, and will need to supply at least two or three letters of recommendation. You should identify the faculty, clinical instructors, employers, and other professionals who know you best and can speak highly of your qualifications, experience, and character *before* applying for positions (Boyar, 2012). Aim to obtain at least two to three letters of recommendation from faculty members, two of whom have taught you in clinical and can speak to your nursing practice abilities. In addition, ask employers or supervisors if they would be willing to write recommendation letters.

It is a good idea to ask for recommendation letters well in advance of your planned deadline. It is advisable to provide a brief summary of your professional goals and your updated résumé to the person, and to give at least two to four weeks to write the letter. Remind the individual of the course and the year in which you were enrolled, or the time frame of the employment relationship and the nature of the position. The easier you make it for the person to write the letter, the more likely it is you will get a good recommendation in a timely manner. It is also a good idea to ask for a few more letters than you think you might need. This will help to ensure that you have at least two to three good letters. You should politely follow up on your request if you do not receive the letter by the mutually agreed upon deadline.

You should have up to five people who are willing to be listed as a reference on your job application. This list will usually include individuals who wrote you a letter of recommendation, but it may also include others. The employer may contact these individuals, as well as those who wrote recommendation letters, by phone or email and may request that they fill out an online form or survey.

**TIP: Compile a list of your references and their contact information before applying for jobs. Do NOT list your references without checking with them first!**

## Where can I find guidelines regarding résumés and cover letters along with examples and interviewing tips?

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing Career Central:**  
<http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/career-central/tools>

**Johns Hopkins University Career Center:**  
<http://pages.jh.edu/~careers/students/BuildyourSkills/resumescoverletters.html>

**New York University Wasserman Center for Career Development:**  
<https://www.nyu.edu/life/resources-and-services/career-development/prepare-for-the-job-search.html>



**Purdue University Online Writing Lab Cover Letter Workshop:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/723/03/>

**Purdue University Online Writing Lab Interviews:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/34/50/>

**Purdue University Online Writing Lab Résumé Workshop:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/719/1/>

**Purdue University Online Writing Lab Sample Résumés:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/927/1/>

**Stony Brook University Career Center:**

<http://career.stonybrook.edu/students/prepare/resumes>

**TIP: You can find free résumé templates at:**

- <https://www.resume-now.com/builder/load.aspx#>
- [https://www.myperspectives.com/lp/mprwzlp03.aspx?tag=150510200509740&hitlogid=297222502&cobrand=CLEAR&utm\\_source=PPC-Asc-Google-MPR--Search&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=Resume-Builder-10366&utm\\_keyword=free%20resume%20templates](https://www.myperspectives.com/lp/mprwzlp03.aspx?tag=150510200509740&hitlogid=297222502&cobrand=CLEAR&utm_source=PPC-Asc-Google-MPR--Search&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Resume-Builder-10366&utm_keyword=free%20resume%20templates)
- [https://www.resumehelp.com/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_keyword=free%20resume%20templates&gclid=COCIwLG46sQCFdcYgQodwwEA5w](https://www.resumehelp.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_keyword=free%20resume%20templates&gclid=COCIwLG46sQCFdcYgQodwwEA5w)
- <https://resumegenius.com/resume/resume-templates>

## What else do I need to do when applying for jobs?

Be organized. Maintain spreadsheets or files with information regarding your job search. Make a schedule of the application, follow-up, and interview dates for each position along with the names of people with whom you have spoken within the organization. Make notes about job search strategies and related information regarding the organization. Keep electronic and paper records of your license(s) and certifications and make sure they remain up to date.

## How do I complete online job applications?

When completing online applications, it is very important to read and follow the directions carefully. You must make sure you have supplied all required documentation, such as all college-level transcripts and recommendation letters. It is permissible to apply for more than one position in the same agency or company.

**TIP: Below are some suggestions for completing online applications.**

- Pick a quiet location.
- Allow enough time to fully complete each application.

- Have the correct version of your résumé, customized cover letter, list of references, and recommendation letters readily available to be uploaded for each job. *Label each file with your first name, last name, type of document, and organization name.*
- *Create only one profile for each agency or company*, regardless of the number of positions to which are applying. Save your login information, i.e., email address, username, and password.
- Make sure you are applying for the correct position and that you meet the qualifications.
- Use the save button at each step of the application.
- Only use the back and forward buttons located *within the application*. Avoid using the Internet browser back button or arrow at the top of your screen. Otherwise, you may lose important information or be kicked out of the application.
- Take your time, click each button once, and be patient.
- Check your application at least three times before you click “submit” to make sure there are no mistakes.
- Unless the posting specifically tells you not to do so, call to confirm receipt of your application, inquire about next steps, and express your gratitude to the person to whom you are speaking.
- Check the status of your applications daily and follow up at acceptable intervals depending on the job, usually in one week, and then again in two weeks.

## What is the Nurse Career Battery Test?

Some employers will require you to complete a behavioral or personality inventory as part of your job application. One such inventory is the Nurse Career Battery Test developed by Developmental Dimensions International (2005) and sometimes referred to as the “DDI.” The Nurse Career Battery Test is a multi-formatted behavioral inventory designed to help employers select RNs that assesses: 1) work-related judgment, 2) work style and disposition, and 3) background experience.

### **TIP: Additional information about the Nurse Career Battery Test can be found at the Web links below.**

- **Tests at a Glance: Nurse Career Battery:**  
[https://www.ddiworld.com/ddiworld/media/facts/nursecareerbattery\\_tag\\_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.ddiworld.com/ddiworld/media/facts/nursecareerbattery_tag_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf)
- **How to Take the Nursing Career Battery Test:**  
<http://work.chron.com/nursing-career-battery-test-18524.html>

## How do I prepare for a job interview?

Being prepared for the interview is very important. The interview will likely determine whether or not you get the job. Start by reviewing the research notes you have on the organization, including its mission, vision, the position requirements, and why

you are an excellent fit for the role (NYU, 2015a). Be ready to talk about any interactions you have had with that agency, its staff, or its administration.

Know your key strengths and transferable skills along with examples from previous degrees or careers that would be applicable to nursing and can be discussed during the interview. These key qualities can include: dedication, flexibility, advocacy, teamwork, attitude, motivation, communication, and problem solving. Graduate nurses with a prior, non-nursing degree will need to address why they went back to school for nursing, and how they can use their previous experience. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation *New Careers in Nursing* alumni should mention their scholarships and key leadership development and mentoring program experiences.

Practice, practice, practice! If your school's Career Center offers an opportunity for an in-person or online mock interview, you are advised to take advantage of this resource. You may also practice in front of a mirror, or people whom you trust to give you honest feedback.

Remember the interview is your opportunity to tell the prospective employer about you, *and* it is your chance to ask questions about the position and the organization. Prepare a list of questions about the position and organization, including the orientation period and available support resources.

Interview formats may vary. You may be asked to interview individually or in a group. Or, you may be interviewed by video chat or phone. Be prepared to spend the day being interviewed by multiple people if necessary. Prior to your scheduled interview, maintain your normal routine, eat well, and get a good night's sleep.

### **TIP: Below are some suggestions when preparing for an interview.**

- **Clothing:** Dress professionally and conservatively whether your interview is in-person, an online video chat, or on the phone. It is recommended that you wear a suit. It is safer to overdress than to be underdressed. Navy or dark colors are preferred. As an alternative, you can wear a collared shirt, dress slacks, a professional skirt at or below the knee, and/or a jacket.
- **Appearance:** Minimal makeup and jewelry are recommended. Avoid perfume or cologne due to possible allergies. Fingernails should be clean, trimmed short, and nail polish should not be chipped.
- **Travel:** Get travel directions and your specific meeting location details in advance. If possible, do a trial run at the same time of day you will be traveling to the interview. Leave extra time in case of unexpected delays.
- **Phone:** Turn OFF your mobile phone and put it away or leave it in the car.
- **Documents:** Bring copies of your RN license, certifications, cover letter, résumé, list of references, and recommendation letters.
- **Professional demeanor:** Smile and be enthusiastic! Maintain eye contact and provide a firm handshake. Speak in a clear, confident voice loudly enough to be heard. Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal body language. Do *not* chew gum, play with your hair, or fiddle with your pen.

“ You need to make your best first impression. ”

- **Notes:** It is a good idea to take notes. You can buy an inexpensive black leather or vinyl portfolio folder with a notepad and penholder that also can be used to hold your documents.
- **Strengths:** Have a few stories ready that illustrate your strengths, leadership skills, problem-solving ability, and teamwork whether they are related to nursing or not.
- **Weaknesses:** When asked about your weaknesses, be prepared with examples and reframe these as areas for professional growth.
- **Questions:** Review your list of questions to make sure you have not forgotten to ask something important.
- **Hiring process:** Discuss the next steps in the hiring process and the time line for the employer to make a decision.
- **Salary:** Know the salary range for entry-level positions. Do NOT ask about the salary unless you are requested to do so, or you receive a job offer. It is unlikely that the salary will be negotiable in an entry-level nursing position.

## How do I write a thank you letter?

You should send a thank you letter to everyone who interviews you, preferably within 24 hours but no more than 48 hours after your interview. This letter should be *brief* and may be sent via email, LinkedIn, or a handwritten note. Your goals are to leave a positive impression, reiterate your interest in the position, and show appreciation for the time the person spent to meet with you (NYU, 2015b).

**TIP: Remember to follow up in a week or as appropriate according to the hiring time line.**

## How do I decide if I should take a job offer?

If you receive a job offer, you want to make sure you understand the terms of employment. Find out about the start date, salary, benefits, probationary period, and any other requirements, e.g., physical exam, drug screening, medication calculation, and/or knowledge test. Reflect upon the advantages and any potential disadvantages of the position. If you receive multiple offers or are waiting to hear from another employer, you will need to assess your priorities. Weigh the pros and cons of each job offer. Remember that no matter how well an interview may have gone, there is no guarantee you will receive an offer. A mentor (see Chapter 2) may be helpful in discussing your options, but ultimately you are the only one who can decide what is best for you.

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## Chapter 2

# Establishing and Sustaining Successful Mentoring Relationships

*“I have a few senior nurses that whenever I see them I ask questions that only 20 years of experience can give. The more respect and humility you show to senior nurses the more they will reach out to you and have your back. You can also ask your manager to set up a mentoring program on your unit if it does not exist already. Or, you can ask to have the manager set you up with a staff member that could be a mentor. On our unit we have a new manager with about half of the nursing staff with 10-plus years of experience and the other half with less than two years. It makes much sense for there to be a mentor program on our unit, and one was created just recently.”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014***

The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with information for establishing a successful mentoring partnership as you transition into the professional nursing workforce.

### What is mentorship?

*“To me, mentoring is getting the leadership, support, influence, connection, and backing I need to achieve my life’s philosophy, which is defined as ‘M.I.R.A.C.L.E.’ M—Mentor those coming behind, I—Inspire others to pursue maximum possibilities by tapping into their educational and life experiences, R—Resolve issues and conflicts among others by gentle urging, A—Assist others with tools and resources in order to achieve collective impact, C—Clarify misconceptions and provide clear directions to those I lead, L—Liberate others from defeatist and ‘status quo’ mentality, and E—Empower and educate others about visions and tasks.”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2012***

A mentor is an individual who helps another to develop areas such as career progression, scholarly achievements, and personal development (Meier, 2013). Mentorship between nurses typically occurs between a novice and an expert and can serve as a means of socialization into the profession, as mentors may serve as role models for the acquisition of professional behaviors (Beecroft, Santner, Lacy, Kunzman, & Dorey, 2006).

Mentorship is *different* from preceptorship, which is a guided clinical skills development activity (Rush, 2013), such as the nurse residency and preceptorship programs discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. Mentorship between nurses and other professionals can serve as a means of personal growth in other areas such as leadership and professional development.

**“ Self-reflection helps you to sustain and grow your mentoring partnership. ”**

## Where do I find a mentor?

Reflect for a moment...there are most likely many people in your life who have greatly influenced you. Who are these people? What is it about them that impacted your life? Is it that they always seem to have a well-reasoned answer to questions? Do they have particular clinical or leadership skills that you admire? Do they always maintain a positive focus no matter what is going on around them? These considerations serve as a baseline in your search for a mentor.

### TIP: There are many places to look for a mentor:

- **In the workplace:** Seek out colleagues who are professional, reliable, accountable, and knowledgeable. Whom do you admire in your workplace and why?
- **Outside of the workplace:** You may wish to look for a mentor that does not work at your place of employment. Your mentor also does not have to be a nurse. The mentor may be found within associations and organizations to which you belong, or activities in which you participate, and even among relatives. Who do you respect and why?
- **Alumni mentors:** You may want to consider finding a mentor from the RWJF NCIN scholar graduates from prior years or through the NCIN Scholars Network Web page at <http://ncinscholarsnetwork.org/main/authorization/signIn?target=http%3A%2F%2Fncinscholarsnetwork.org%2F>. Building a professional network is key to your own professional advancement and can serve as a resource for problem solving through gaining insight and being in the know. Whom do you want to be in your professional network and why?
- **Professor:** Consider identifying a teacher from your nursing program to serve as your mentor. Former professors are knowledgeable and have great familiarity with the context of your own nursing educational experience.
- **Student Mentor:** You may wish to keep in contact with other members of your graduation class. While they cannot serve in a typical mentoring role, they are nevertheless developing their own social network within which you may find your own mentor.

## How do I establish a mentoring partnership?

Once you have identified a mentor, the next step is to reach out and ask if that person is willing to engage in the mentoring partnership and role. You should also explore the particular “talent” that the individual could help you to develop (Baumann, Hunsberger, & Crea-Arsenio, 2011). If the mentoring partnership is going to be successful, both the mentor and mentee must be prepared for this special relationship.

## How do I prepare and become engaged in the mentoring partnership?

Be willing to accept “no” as an answer. Do not take it personally if your selected mentor does not want to engage in the mentoring partnership. Individuals who do not agree to serve as a mentor have their reasons for saying “no.” Do not get upset and



give up, as the partnership probably would not have worked well. There are many outstanding professionals who are willing to serve in a mentoring capacity, so continue searching using the guidelines presented above.

Once you have selected a mentor and that person agrees to the mentoring partnership, there are a few things you can do to get ready for the experience. Reflect on your learning needs. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my clinical learning needs?
- How can I improve on my current skills?
- What are my leadership development needs?
- How do others perceive me as a colleague in the work setting?

Share the answers to these questions with your mentor. There are several types of activities in which you and your mentor can engage to facilitate your learning. Together with your mentor you can set goals and an ideal time line. Ask yourself, “What does each of us wish to gain from the relationship, by when, and how?” Together you can develop an agreement about an approach best suited to facilitate your learning, while establishing a mutually satisfying partnership.

## How do I sustain the mentoring partnership?

*“Mentoring has renewed my passion for my purpose, given me tools, is keeping me focused, and is holding me accountable for my actions. It’s all about growth.”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2012*

Establishing a trusting mentoring partnership is critical to successful outcomes. Confidentiality is always an important factor to discuss with your mentor so that trust is built and sustained. It is best to be humble, listen and learn, and respond accordingly. It is advisable to maintain this open-minded perspective. Later on, your turn will come for teaching and mentoring others.

Reflect for a moment...ask yourself the following questions:

- What can you do to develop and sustain a trusting mentoring partnership?
- What does your mentor have to do to grow and nurture this mentoring partnership?

It is important that the mentoring experience be a shared partnership with lots of give-and-take and frequent feedback. Discussions, deliberations, and debates may ensue. These two-way exchanges greatly contribute to the learning process.

Self-reflection is an important activity that allows us to gain insight into many things, including our own behaviors. A keen sense of self-awareness can be obtained through a process of self-discovery and evaluation. Ask yourself frequently, “How is this partnership working? How am I perceived by my mentor? Am I conducting myself in a professional manner at all times?”

**TIP: Keep a reflective journal or write a reflective blog. These allow you to look back and monitor your own growth along the professional pathway (Kramer, Maguire, Halter, Brewer, & Schmalenberg, 2013).**

## How do I change the mentoring partnership?

It is a realistic expectation that your relationship with your mentor will change over time. You may want to consider revisiting the goals and time line you developed to determine whether or not you have reached them, or if you need to revise them.

Is it time to transition? It may be time to move on. If so, give yourself the chance. You will also be opening the mentoring opportunity to another. Stay in contact with your mentor in a new peer-to-peer status.

**TIP: For more information on mentoring, you can access the NCIN Mentoring Toolkit resources at <http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/node/4759>**

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## Chapter 3

# Starting Your Nursing Career: Strategies for Success

*“As a beginner you are not supposed to know things. Ask questions all day long, even if you know the answer already. Someone may explain things differently and ‘simple’ things make more sense hearing it from different people. You may have more than one preceptor, probably closer to 5-10 different preceptors. Ask them the same questions; they may each have a different answer. You may also start on your unit at the same time another new grad does. Don’t let yourself compare yourself to them or vice versa. Learn from each other and try your best to be vulnerable to them, don’t act like you are better than them, they will react by doing the same.”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014***

The purpose of this chapter is to offer you strategies for success as you begin your nursing career.

### How do I get started?

Make sure you understand what will be expected of you as a new nurse, and how you are being evaluated during your probationary period and afterward. Depending on where you work, you may have a formal orientation course, or a nurse residency program with classroom and/or practice components. Carefully review the state nurse practice act, the relevant organizational policies and procedures, and the curriculum for your specific orientation or nurse residency program.

You will also need to become familiar with other standards of care that you need to follow, including Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, social media guidelines, professional practice standards, and evidence-based guidelines for your patient population. The ANA (2015d) recommends that nurses keep the following principles in mind when using social media: 1) no social media interaction is totally private; 2) access to your social media site should be limited through the use of available privacy settings; and 3) while providing accurate health information to the public is permissible, providing advice to patients should be avoided as it may be a HIPAA and ethics violation. The ANA and National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) offer social media guidelines and resources for nurses (see Chapter 1). To find out more about HIPAA, go to: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>

Once you are employed, you will most likely be covered by your employer’s professional liability insurance. You may also want to obtain your own professional liability insurance to provide coverage in case you practice in other settings. Some professional nursing organizations, like the ANA, offer insurance discounts to their members. When deciding whether or not to buy professional liability insurance, you should explore whether there is a Good Samaritan Law in your state. A Good Samaritan Law protects health care providers who deliver emergency care, except in cases of gross negligence or malpractice (see <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/good+samaritan+law>). Check the laws in the state(s) in which you practice. You also need to consider your liability if you volunteer or work part time.

**“ You don’t  
have to be great  
to start, but you  
have to start to  
be great. ”**  
– Zig Ziglar

**TIP: See ANA Member Insurance Services at**

<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/Discounts/ProfessionalLiabilityInsurance.html>

**What should I expect as I begin work as a nurse?**

*“As a new nurse, I had to become comfortable with adapting to a continually changing environment. I find myself planning ahead for my shift but often I find patient needs continually changing and I’m having to adjust the plan of care for these patients as well. There have been numerous discouraging moments in my career but I have to learn to reflect on my experiences to allow my confidence to grow and cultivate my professional identity. These reflections are what I have to share to those who are just entering the nursing profession and those who came before me. We are all here ‘for good’ (Sanchez-Vera, 2014).”*

**RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2013**

While it is a very exciting time, it is also natural to have some anxiety as you embark on your new career. As a newly licensed professional nurse, the realization that you are fully accountable and responsible for the care you provide to your patients may be overwhelming. It is important to remember that you will not become an expert nurse overnight and your transition from an advanced beginner to a competent nurse will take time (Benner, 1984).

Pellico, Brewer, and Kovner (2009) identified these themes in describing the major challenges faced by newly licensed registered nurses: *colliding expectations, the need for speed, you want too much, and how dare you*. *Colliding expectations* refers to the struggles new nurses face regarding the incongruence between with their implicit view of the profession and the reality they are experiencing. *The need for speed* identifies the pressures on new nurses to function as quickly and competently as experienced nurses. *You want too much* describes work-related stressors imposed on new nurses. *How dare you* illustrates the lack of respect, mistreatment, verbal abuse, and bullying or antagonistic behavior from professional colleagues. Strategies to help you to address and to overcome these potential professional and personal challenges are presented below.

**How do I manage *colliding expectations*?**

It is important to reflect upon your experiences and to bring them to a conscious level. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my reality?
- Are there differences between what I learned in school and what I am experiencing now at work?
- Am I able to identify these conflicting perspectives?

Share the answers to these questions with your mentor. Your mentor will be able to guide you through this reflective process and perhaps offer advice for how to navigate these differences (see Chapter 2).

## Ethical dilemmas

Ethical dilemmas may result in colliding expectations. As a new nurse, you may feel unprepared when confronted with patient care situations that pose ethical conflicts. The ANA (2015a) Code of Ethics defines the core moral principles, obligations, and responsibilities of the profession and can provide you with an ethical framework to resolve these dilemmas (see Table 1).

Poikkeus, Numminen, Suhonen, and Leino-Kilpi (2014) conducted a mixed-method systematic review to synthesize empirical evidence about how nurses' ethical competence can be supported. They found the most commonly used organizational approaches to foster nurses' abilities included: a) engaging in ethical discussions through training programs, b) implementing ethics forums, c) providing expert consultation, and/or d) forming an ethics committee to address clinical moral dilemmas. If these resources do not exist in your setting, you may wish to enlist the assistance of nursing leadership in developing one or more of these support strategies.

**Table 1. American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses**

<b>Provision 1</b>	The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.
<b>Provision 2</b>	The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.
<b>Provision 3</b>	The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.
<b>Provision 4</b>	The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to provide optimal patient care.
<b>Provision 5</b>	The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.
<b>Provision 6</b>	The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.
<b>Provision 7</b>	The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.
<b>Provision 8</b>	The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.
<b>Provision 9</b>	The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing and health policy.

**Source:** American Nurses Association. (2015). Code of ethics with interpretative statements. Silver Spring, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/EthicsStandards/CodeofEthicsforNurses/Code-of-Ethics-For-Nurses.html>

**TIP: The ANA (2015b) offers this advice when facing ethical dilemmas:**

- Know yourself
- Live your values
- Listen to your gut
- Check in with others
- Practice with respect

**How do I address *the need for speed*?**

As an advanced beginner nurse, you need to give yourself time to develop and master the skills necessary to become a competent nurse (Benner, 1984; Gladwell, 2008). You should set realistic expectations and allow yourself the time you need to mature as a professional nurse. Nelson (2010) advises new graduate nurses to give themselves the opportunity to develop their routines, and cautions them to value safety over speed in completing tasks. She further recommends that new nurses seek guidance from their preceptors, mentors, and experienced nurses to help them to become integrated into the health care team (see Chapter 2).

**Time management and setting priorities**

It takes time and experience for a new nurse to learn to balance his or her responsibilities, and to set priorities for patient care. Use the knowledge you gained in school to establish priorities, such as the ABCs of airway, breathing, and circulation, as well as Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs.

Various factors will influence your ability to prioritize, including the urgency of the situation, demands from others, impending deadlines, and your familiarity with the task (Ponte & Conlin, 2014).

**Documentation**

Nurses are legally accountable and responsible to document the care they deliver in the health record, which may be paper, electronic, or a combination of both. You will receive education and training on the documentation system used in your organization. However, new nurses may find it challenging to balance their patient care responsibilities with accurate and timely documentation.

While electronic health records have many advantages, these may pose challenges for nurses that include: spending more time focusing on the computer than the patient, taking longer to chart, and using more check boxes and less narrative to describe the patient and relevant individualized care (Stokowski, 2013).

The ANA (2010) has outlined several key nursing documentation principles, regardless of the type of system used:

1. Documentation should be easily accessible, concise, accurate, legible, timely, and reflect the nursing process.

**“ Defining your core values and establishing an ethical framework are fundamental to your practice. ”**

2. Nurses at all levels in every setting need to be educated regarding the organization's policies and procedures on documentation, and receive training on the technical aspects, including computerized system hardware and software.
3. All nurses are responsible for knowing their organization's policies and procedures on documentation.
4. Documentation systems must be secure and protect the confidentiality of the information of patients, professional providers, and the organization.
5. Documentation entries need to be authentic, accurate, legible, and be date and time stamped.
6. Approved standardized terminology must be used to describe the nursing care provided to patients.

**ANA Principles for Nursing Documentation (available for members):**

<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ThePracticeofProfessionalNursing/NursingStandards/ANAPrinciples/PrinciplesforDocumentation.pdf>

**Documentation for Nurses from the Nurses Service Organization:**

<http://www.nso.com/risk-education/individuals/educator-toolkit/documentation-for-nurses>

**TIP: Here are some ways to address *the need for speed*:**

- Develop a system or routine.
- Arrive 15 minutes early for work and plan your day.
- Agree upon break times with co-workers at the beginning of your shift.
- Get organized by collecting the necessary equipment and supplies.
- Assess priority patient needs and address them first.
- Delegate appropriate tasks to others.
- Make sure you have the right patient and the right medical record before you document.
- Think about what is important to include in the medical record *before* you chart information.
- Be careful when using dropdown menus, or if copying and pasting information in an electronic record.
- Document in real time as much as possible, particularly medications, treatments, and vital signs.
- Schedule at least two opportunities to catch up on documentation during your shift, e.g., a few hours after arrival and prior to the end.
- Avoid interruptions when administering medications.
- Communicate clearly, ask questions, and seek help if you need it!

*“Knowing when to delegate, whom to delegate to, and how to delegate politely and professionally is critical in fostering team building and leadership.”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2013***

## Delegation

Delegation is the *transfer of responsibility* for the performance of an activity from one person to another while the *accountability for the outcome is retained* (ANA, 2005). Knowing when and how to delegate requires complex skills that include an understanding of your authority, responsibility, and accountability in accordance with your state nurse practice act and your institution's policies (Weydt, 2010). Remember it will take time and practice to develop effective delegation skills.

The ANA (2005) recommends registered nurses (RNs) follow these principles when delegating tasks to others:

- The RN may delegate components of care but not the nursing process.
- The RN is responsible for the nursing process, including assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- The RN's decision to delegate must be based on the condition of the patient, competence of the individual to whom the task is delegated, and the degree of supervision required.
- The RN must use clinical judgment in following the "Five Rights of Delegation," meaning the:
  - *Right Task* is one that can be delegated.
  - *Right Circumstances* are when no independent judgment is required.
  - *Right Person* is someone who is qualified and competent.
  - *Right Direction and Communication* involves a clear explanation of the task, the expected outcomes, and what to report.
  - *Right Supervision and Evaluation* requires feedback to the person performing the task that assesses its completion and includes areas for improvement as needed.

### TIP: Delegation is a two-way process.

- The *RN delegator* is responsible for:
  - The act of delegation.
  - Supervising performance of the delegated task.
  - Assessment and follow-up evaluation.
  - Intervention or corrective action to ensure safe care.
- The *delegatee*, or person designated to perform the task, is responsible for:
  - His/her own actions.
  - Accepting delegation within the parameters of training, education, and competency.
  - Communicating information.
  - Completing the task.

## You want too much. How do I manage work demands?

The demands from employers, co-workers, patients, and others can exert significant pressures on newly licensed nurses (Pellico et al., 2009). Effective communication skills are essential for successful professional practice in order to develop strong relationships with nursing colleagues, interprofessional team members, and patients.



New nurses may find it challenging to work with more experienced “senior” nurses. It is important to learn how to speak up, to ask questions, and to begin to have trust in yourself, your knowledge, and your skills. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has developed an evidence-based framework called TeamSTEPPS (Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety) to promote effective team building and development strategies that foster safe patient care environments across settings (AHRQ, 2013). Several TeamSTEPPS strategies that may be particularly useful for new nurses are listed in *Table 2*.

For further training, the NCSBN provides online Transition to Practice modules (2015a) as well as a Transition to Practice Toolkit (2015b) for new nurses.

**NCSBN Transition to Practice Modules:**

[https://www.ncsbn.org/2013\\_TransitiontoPractice\\_Modules.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/2013_TransitiontoPractice_Modules.pdf)

**NCSBN Transition to Practice Toolkit:**

<https://www.ncsbn.org/687.htm>

**TIP: The ANA (2015c) suggests these strategies to minimize work-related stress:**

- Limit your work schedule to a maximum of 12 hours per day and 60 hours per week.
- Work with your nursing colleagues to maximize teamwork and help to develop standardized practice routines.
- Practice good communication techniques and listening skills.
- Implement conflict resolution strategies and refuse to tolerate bullying or hostile behavior at all levels, including lateral violence or aggressive actions from co-workers.

**Cultural competence**

One way to manage work demands is to improve your communication skills. Nurses should strive to become culturally competent in order to deliver patient-centered care and to work effectively with co-workers from diverse backgrounds. It is important that nurses show sensitivity and respect for others who may have different beliefs and values. Through the implementation of culturally competent care, nurses may be able to decrease racial and ethnic health disparities and communicate more effectively with others who have different values (Douglas et al., 2009).

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) provides the following resources to help nurses become culturally competent:

**Cultural Competency in Baccalaureate Nursing Education (AACN, 2008):**

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/leading-initiatives/education-resources/competency.pdf>

**Toolkit for Culturally Competent Baccalaureate Nursing Education (AACN, 2008):**

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/toolkit.pdf>

**Cultural Competencies for Graduate Nursing Students:**

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/cultural-competency>

**Cultural Competency Toolkit for Graduate Nursing Students:**

[http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/Cultural\\_Competency\\_Toolkit\\_Grad.pdf](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/Cultural_Competency_Toolkit_Grad.pdf)

**Intergenerational differences**

Increased awareness of intergenerational differences among patients and colleagues can enhance effective communication and reduce the likelihood of conflicts in professional relationships (Sallee, 2014). By understanding their various points of view, nurses may be able to work more collaboratively with patients and co-workers from different generations.

**TIP: Here are some resources that may be helpful:**

- **The Multi-Generational Workforce: Management Implications and Strategies for Collaboration from the Boston College Center for Work and Family:**

[https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications/pdf/MultiGen\\_EBS.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications/pdf/MultiGen_EBS.pdf)

- **Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (and Generation Z) Working Together from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund:**

<http://www.un.org/staffdevelopment/pdf/Designing%20Recruitment,%20Selection%20&%20Talent%20Management%20Model%20tailored%20to%20meet%20UNJSPF%27s%20Business%20Development%20Needs.pdf>

**Patient satisfaction**

Nurses play a critical role in their patients' satisfaction regarding the health care they receive. Whether you work in a hospital, private practice, or community setting, patients will provide formal and informal feedback on the nursing care you provide. By becoming familiar with the patient satisfaction measures used by your organization, you will have a better understanding of the expectations placed upon you to provide high-quality care and improved patient outcomes.

**TIP: Below are some patient satisfaction resources.**

- **The Joint Commission: Frequently Asked Questions About Quality Check and Quality Reports:**

[http://www.qualitycheck.org/help\\_qc\\_faqs.aspx](http://www.qualitycheck.org/help_qc_faqs.aspx)

- **Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAPS):**

<http://www.hcahpsonline.org/home.aspx>

- **Press Ganey Frequently Asked Questions About HCAPS:**

<http://pressganey.com/researchResources/governmentInitiatives/HCAHPS/faqs.aspx>

## Adjusting to shift work

New nurses are often hired to work shifts outside of the normal daytime hours. While higher pay and flexible hours are some advantages to working evenings or nights, new nurses may find it challenging to adapt their lifestyle and sleep patterns to the demands of these shifts. You need to be aware of the physical and mental challenges as well as the potential health and safety risks when working evening or night shifts. Some resources for meeting these demands are listed below.

### 10 Tips for Night Shift Nurses:

<http://www.nursetogether.com/10-tips-for-night-shift-nurses>

### Nurses Are Talking About: Working the Night Shift:

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/777286>

### Sleep and the Night Shift:

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/excessive-sleepiness-10/night-shift-sleep>

## TIP: The ANA offers advice for working evenings or nights (Scott, 2010):

- Make sleep a priority and train your body to fall asleep for long periods by minimizing the effects of daylight, e.g., wear wrap-around sunglasses when driving home.
- Create a bedroom environment conducive to daytime sleeping by using room-darkening shades, lowering the room temperature, wearing earplugs, turning off phones, and creating guidelines for family and friends to reduce sounds and disruptions while you are sleeping.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet during work hours and avoid exercise, caffeine, alcohol, and heavy meals prior to sleep.
- Schedule brief, frequent breaks and exercise to stay alert during work hours, and partner with a colleague to check each other's responsibilities when feeling tired.
- If possible, carpool or take public transportation home after working evenings or nights.

## How dare you? How do I handle bullying behavior?

Many nurses are happy to provide guidance and support to new nurses. Unfortunately, some nurses, particularly new graduates, may experience bullying by nurse colleagues, physicians, ancillary staff, and others. Workplace bullying involves recurrent, harmful abuse by others (<http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/definition/>). It is important that you utilize effective communication and conflict-resolution approaches to address bullying activities, such as the Team-STEPPS strategies (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS)**

Strategy	Definition
<b>SBAR</b>	Communicates critical information that requires immediate attention and action concerning a patient’s condition. <b>S</b> = Situation—What is going on with the patient? <b>B</b> = Background—What is the clinical background or context? <b>A</b> = Assessment—What do I think the problem is? <b>R</b> = Recommendation and Request—What would I do to correct it?
<b>Call-Out</b>	Communicates important or critical information.
<b>Check-Back</b>	Uses closed-loop communication to ensure that information conveyed by the sender is understood by the receiver as intended.
<b>Handoff</b>	Transfers information, along with authority and responsibility, during transitions in care across the continuum and provides an opportunity to ask questions, clarify, and confirm.
<b>I’M SAFE Checklist</b>	Team members assess their own safety status. <b>I</b> = Illness <b>M</b> = Medication <b>S</b> = Stress <b>A</b> = Alcohol and Drugs <b>F</b> = Fatigue <b>E</b> = Eating and Elimination
<b>CUS</b>	Uses assertive statements: I am <b>CONCERNED!</b> I am <b>UNCOMFORTABLE!</b> This is a <b>SAFETY</b> issue!
<b>Two-Challenge Rule</b>	Empowers team members to “stop the line” when a vital safety concern is revealed. When an initial assertive statement is ignored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You must assertively voice concern at least two times to ensure that it has been heard.</li> <li>■ The team member being challenged must recognize that the safety concern has been heard.</li> <li>■ If the safety issue remains unaddressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a stronger course of action</li> <li>• Contact a supervisor or follow the chain of command.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>DESC Script</b>	Provides a productive way to resolve conflicts. <b>D</b> = Describe the specific situation or behavior <b>E</b> = Express how the situation makes you feel and state your concerns <b>S</b> = Suggest other alternatives and seek agreement <b>C</b> = Consequences should be stated in terms of impact on established team goals that strive for consensus

**Source:** Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ]. (2013, December). *Pocket Guide TeamSTEPPS 2.0: Team Strategies & Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety* [Pub. No. 14-0001-2]. Retrieved from AHRQ website: <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/education/curriculum-tools/teamstepps/instructor/essentials/pocketguide.pdf>

### **TIP: The ANA (2015e) has suggestions for dealing with bullying behaviors:**

- Be aware of your own behavior and do not engage in bullying behaviors.
- Identify issues that elicit a strong emotional response from you.
- Notify your immediate supervisor when bullying behavior occurs.
- Maintain a positive perspective, as your employer will likely recognize the related institutional costs of bullying.
- Intervene when you witness bullying behaviors.
- Be a positive role model and utilize effective conflict resolution strategies.
- Become empowered and confident through self-reflection and continued professional growth.
- Challenge bullies rather than choosing to avoid confronting their behavior.

### **What do I need to do to maintain a healthy personal and professional life?**

Nurses need to take care of themselves before they can care for others. As a new nurse, it is important that you begin your professional practice by implementing self-care behaviors that include getting adequate sleep, maintaining a healthy diet, taking scheduled breaks, and engaging in activities outside of the workplace. You must put passion, energy, and effort into your work and your play (Gladwell, 2008)!

### **TIP: Suggestions for maintaining a work-life balance:**

- Make taking care of yourself a priority.
- Reflect daily.
- Identify the lessons learned through hardship and difficult times.
- Express gratitude for the good things in your life.
- Be patient with all things, especially with one's self.
- No one is perfect. Learn to forgive yourself and others.
- Be positive. Turn challenges into opportunities.
- Be a good listener.
- Laugh and have fun every day!
- Schedule time to spend with family and friends on your days off.
- Find a hobby that you enjoy.
- Plan recreational activities on a regular basis.
- Schedule a vacation.
- Consider advancing your education or engaging in professional development activities.
- Volunteer to do something to help others.

## **“ The Success of Teamwork**

*Coming together is a  
beginning.*

*Keeping together  
is progress.*

*Working together  
is success.* ”

– Henry Ford

## Managing your finances

Now that you have the benefit of a steady work income, it is important to make a budget to pay your expenses and any debt, including credit cards and student loans. It is also never too early to begin to save for retirement. Investigate whether your organization provides opportunities for pre-tax spending accounts for transportation or health care expenses. Look at your options for health insurance and compare premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket expenses. Ask if your employer matches your contributions to your retirement fund. If so, it may be worth it to contribute the maximum amount allowable.

### TIP: Below are resources you may find helpful.

- **Top Reasons People Don't Budget:**

<http://www.gatherlittlebylittle.com/2008/04/top-reasons-people-dont-budget/>

- **Finding a Budget That Works:**

<http://www.gatherlittlebylittle.com/2008/03/finding-a-budget-that-works/>

- **How to Pay Off Student Loans Within 5 Years of Graduation:**

<http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2014/06/04/how-to-pay-off-student-loans-within-5-years-of-graduation>

- **How to Make a Retirement Budget:**

<http://moneyover55.about.com/od/budgetingsaving/a/How-To-Make-A-Retirement-Budget.htm>

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## Chapter 4

# Resources for Defining Career Goals and a Path for Professional Growth

*“When developing career goals, you need to have a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve. Being able to precisely articulate this vision into measurable short-term achievable accomplishments will only help you to move closer to the ultimate goal. Taking small steps along the way will also help keep you motivated and will build your confidence. The RWJF NCIN program is an excellent program to support young scholars in goal setting. Using peer and faculty support to help shape ideas and clarify goals is one of the hallmark principles of mentoring.”*

*Dean, School of Nursing*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with information for defining career goals and a path for professional growth.

### How do I progress from novice to expert?

You will grow in your nursing career as you become more and more experienced. Keep in mind that all beginnings are difficult, but beginnings don't last forever! Ask yourself the following questions:

- What areas of my nursing care need improvement?
- What resources are available to me so that I can improve?
- What external activities and resources can I use to become more knowledgeable?
- What are my personal and professional strengths?
- How can I use my strengths to move my career along?
- How can I improve my leadership skills?

In today's challenging job market, you may not have been offered a choice when you began in your first nursing position. Even if you work in an area that is not your first choice, you will still gain valuable experiences. These experiences will help enhance your skills in that general area, specialty, or patient population; will help you transition to another position; and will ultimately move you along your career path. Remember that attainment of skills in one clinical area may not enable advancement in all clinical areas. So be patient with all things, including yourself. The good news is that you may find that you are drawn to a particular area, specialty, or patient population area, and this, in turn, may sharpen your interest in advancing toward expert status more quickly. Put passion, effort, and energy into all of your undertakings. These qualities will move you along on your path from novice to expert.

Be aware that “specializing” early in your career may limit your attractiveness to human resources personnel who are looking to hire a “generalist” nurse. Stay mindful of your choices. Always stay alert to new opportunities that present themselves. At the same time, try to never lose sight of your career goals. It may be helpful for you

**“ Commit yourself to lifelong learning. The most valuable asset you'll ever have is your mind and what you put into it. ”**

**– Brian Tracey**

to write down your career goals on a piece of paper and review them frequently. For example, “I want to work on a pediatric acute care unit by 2017” or “I want to begin my graduate education by 2018.”

**TIP: Making your career goals visible will help to keep them “alive.”**

## How do I move from generalist to specialist?

*“One thing that would be helpful is some information about what types of [patient care] floors count toward experience for different certifications. For example, my unit is a cardiothoracic step-down so after 1,000 hours of experience I can sit for the CCRN certification. It would be nice to know all the different certifications and who qualifies to take which exam to better understand the pathway to professionalism.”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014***

Certification in a particular area adds credibility to your professional career. There are numerous opportunities to be acknowledged as a generalist or specialist that require only the bachelor’s degree. There are even more opportunities for specialization at the graduate level, especially in the areas of advanced nursing practice.

The following American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) website offers information regarding nursing certification: <http://www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx>. Explore the ANCC website for full details about the amount of experience required in a particular area prior to certification. ANCC is only one of several certification corporations, some of which focus on a single advanced nursing practice specialty (e.g., midwifery, nurse anesthesia).

Updates on requirements for entry to nursing as an advanced practice registered nurse in each state are published annually. These offer a great snapshot for the nurse who is anticipating a new job opportunity in a different state setting (Phillips, 2014).

## How do I continue my professional growth?

There are many continuing education activities and career ladder opportunities for new nurses. Opportunities do not always present themselves as such. Keep your eyes wide open and look for opportunities that may come in a disguise. Many dilemmas that we face can serve as potential opportunities for future successes. Sometimes this requires an action that most might find difficult to employ, that is, the willingness to take a risk. Consider the circumstance when you might be asked to rotate to an unfamiliar unit that deals with health care situations quite different from those with which you are accustomed. Remember to seek guidance and support from other nurses and, perhaps, even entertain the possibility that you will be attracted to this particular new practice area. This could open new avenues for employment in the future.

Think about another situation in which you might be asked to represent your organization at a meeting where you are expected to debate an issue of policy or clinical practice. You will be required to immerse yourself in the most recent evidenced-based

literature in order to speak knowledgeably. This might prove to be the event that sparks your interest in obtaining a higher educational degree or to seek a volunteer or paid position in the policy area.

Under any circumstance, you may wish to consider continued professional development as an ongoing goal—pursued for its own value, even if it is not required for continued licensure. Requirements for re-licensure vary by state. It is advised that you review the process for licensure in the state in which you reside and know what is expected of you.

**TIP: Many employers will acknowledge continuing education credits or specialty certification with job enhancements and/or monetary rewards. Make sure you know what procedures exist and which incentives are available in your place of employment.**

## **How do I engage in scholarly activities, such as research, publication, and presentation?**

Look for opportunities for both nursing and interprofessional scholarly work. Ask work colleagues or your mentor about opportunities for research, publication, and presentation. In many workplaces, there are committees that promote professional activities that can lead to these types of engagements.

### **Research**

Professional nurses can find opportunities to become involved in clinical research, thereby gaining a broad understanding of the research process and their own interests. For example, the RN might serve as a data collector for clinical investigations being conducted in the workplace by other researchers. The RN might have an opportunity for implementing a research protocol conducted by senior investigators, such as a National Institute of Health clinical trial of a new drug, device, or procedure. In addition, there are various companies that conduct community-based research as an employment option. Actively seek out these types of activities. Not only will your participation provide you with the opportunity for growth and learning, but you also will expand your social and professional network.

**TIP: As your career advances, you may wish to advance your education so you can design and conduct your own research studies. Ideas for research in the domains of nursing are never-ending. See Chapter 5 for more information about pursuit of advanced nursing education.**

### **Publication**

Everything is of interest! As a nurse, you have a significant impact on the health and well-being of your patients. Sharing your unique perspective through a published article in print or a blog may benefit others in the profession and put you on a path toward developing your scholarship. Dissemination of new knowledge and best-prac-

tice approaches advances the art and science of nursing. Every nurse can participate in co-authorship of scholarly articles so that others are informed about new ideas, developments, and innovative approaches. Co-authors can serve as mentors for professional writing.

### Presentation

There are multiple opportunities for making oral presentations to colleagues and peers beginning at the place of work or local community and extending to wider audiences at regional, national, and even international levels.

**TIP: Start small to gain confidence and think big by setting a larger goal, in order to challenge yourself and grow professionally.**

### How can my mentor help me to engage in research, publication, and presentation?

There is opportunity for mentorship in all three of these scholarly areas. Approach a colleague who has participated in any of these activities and ask what role you could play in their next effort. This way you will gain the knowledge and skill to move forward toward your own expertise in the areas. If you have reservations or concerns about public speaking, consider taking a class to enhance your abilities.

**TIP: Public speaking resources are available at:** <http://www.dalecarnegie.com/ebook/presentation-effectiveness-speak-more-effectively-guide/> and <http://www.toastmasters.org/>

### How do I leverage my nursing credential and expand my practice domains?

#### Global engagements

As an RN, there are many opportunities for voluntary service in international settings where you can gain an understanding of how to do more with less and how to do things differently. More importantly, you may also benefit from a perspective of cultural humility and be more culturally competent by valuing a different context and worldview of health and illness. There are also many opportunities for global employment. Professional nurses need to be authorized (registered or licensed) in any country in order to practice. In these types of positions, you will likely learn new practice protocols and gain a new perspective of the status and role of the nurse as either more or less valued as a member of the health care team.

#### Nursing career paths

Consider the many doors that the RN credential can open outside of the hospital or ambulatory care clinical practice setting (Fitzpatrick & Ea, 2011). There are many!

Ask yourself,

“What do I want to be doing in five years?”

The following are a few examples of “next steps” that you might pursue:

- Administration
- Public health
- Home health
- Hospice
- Legal consultant
- Nurse consultant

Opportunity abounds, and new possibilities continue to emerge, particularly in the contemporary era where new models are being defined for systems of health service delivery. Be bold, be open to change, and be confident. Remember that every individual progresses along the continuum from novice to expert across his or her professional lifetime. Ongoing participation in your mentoring partnerships will undoubtedly facilitate your journey along your nursing career path.

**TIP: You may wish to preview the book *201 Careers in Nursing* (Fitzpatrick & Ea, 2011) at <http://www.springerpub.com/201-careers-in-nursing.html>**

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## Chapter 5

# Advancing Your Nursing Education

*“While still a student, I was already thinking about my long-term goal as a nurse. I was looking far ahead...how could I make decision about which advanced degree to choose?”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with information about advancing your education in nursing.

### Why is an advanced degree in nursing important?

The IOM (2010) identifies the importance of pursuing advanced levels of nursing education to improve patient outcomes in today’s rapidly evolving, complex health care environment. The baccalaureate degree prepares nurses for generalist practice. A master’s degree prepares nurses for advanced roles in nursing education, administration, or informatics; or for a clinical specialty as an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). The APRN practice roles include nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, nurse anesthetist, and nurse midwife. For further information regarding advanced practice roles and specialties, please refer to the Fitzpatrick and Ea (2011) book referenced in the tip on page 43. Doctoral-level education may be research- or practice- focused.

The benefits of acquiring an advanced degree in nursing include:

- **Greater employability:** You may realize that embarking on a nursing career means you must be prepared to enhance your abilities as a health care leader. Additional credentials offer access to expanded opportunities and more diverse career choices (Davis-Lewis, 2015).
- **Personal advancement:** You may find that you need additional education in order to move into a new area of nursing, which may result in individual gratification and professional development (Davis-Lewis, 2015).
- **More autonomy:** You can become more autonomous as you build your educational credentials. Collaborative and interdisciplinary practice is a hallmark of advanced practice nursing services (Davis-Lewis, 2015; Riendeau, 2007).
- **Flexibility:** Depending on the field you choose, part-time or full-time employment opportunities may be available. For example, a full-time faculty member can still practice as an advanced practice nurse (Riendeau, 2007).
- **Increased income:** Nurses with advanced education are usually paid higher salaries; however, this depends upon the geographical location, type of practice, and specialty area (Davis-Lewis, 2015; Riendeau, 2007).
- **Career growth:** If your goal is to join the ranks of nursing leaders, an advanced degree will assist you to reach this goal (Riendeau, 2007).

**“ Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. ”**  
**– Malcolm X.**

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) provides the following resources regarding the essential components of these educational degrees:

**AACN (2008) *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice:***

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/BaccEssentials08.pdf>

**AACN (2011) *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing:***

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/MastersEssentials11.pdf>

**AACN (2006) *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice:***

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/publications/position/DNPEssentials.pdf>

**TIP: Explore the following resources:**

- **AACN: *Your Guide to Graduate Nursing Programs:***  
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/publications/brochures/GradStudentsBrochure.pdf>
- **NCSBN: APRNs in the US:**  
<https://www.ncsbn.org/aprn.htm>
- **Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification & Education:**  
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/APRNReport.pdf>
- **Master's Nursing Programs:**  
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/msn-article>

## What do I need to know about doctoral education in nursing?

Doctoral programs in nursing prepare students for leadership roles in education, administration, and clinical practice. The IOM (2010) report emphasizes the urgent need to: a) provide nurses with a seamless transition to higher-level education; and b) double the number of doctorally prepared nurses by 2020 in order to meet the growing demand.

Preparing for doctoral study is a serious commitment. Therefore, it is necessary to research the various types of doctoral degrees and select the doctoral program that best suits your interests and future personal and professional goals (Hawkins & Nezat, 2009). It is also very important to consider the length of the program, costs, financing, and method of curriculum delivery.

*“I am quite unsure which doctoral degree is the best choice for me. What should I do? Are there [web]sites I can go to that can help me or direct me in the process? Are there tips that can help me make the decision [about] which doctoral degree is best for me?”*

***RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2014***



The RWJF NCIN Doctoral Advancement in Nursing (DAN) project was developed to support the preparation of future nursing leaders, faculty, and researchers by facilitating and supporting the seamless transition of students into nursing doctoral programs (see <http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/dan>). The DAN project provides multiple valuable resources for potential doctoral students interested in doctor of philosophy (PhD) or doctor of nursing practice (DNP) programs, including:

**DAN Overview for Mentees:**

<https://ncin.chronus.com/p/main/pages/908?src=tab>

**DAN Readiness Self-Assessment for Doctoral Study:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=xjZMRvwxetSrGiLx5Dii7VZxvBYyVqK1M-J%2fi6V813%2fA%3d>

**DAN Mentoring Site:**

<https://ncin.chronus.com/about>

**DAN Whitepaper:**

<http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/resources/dan-white-paper>

**DAN Student Toolkit:**

<http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/resources/dan-student-toolkit>

**DAN Personal Journey to the PhD:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9eV82BwnbY&feature=youtu.be>

## Are there graduate degrees in other disciplines that may be helpful in advancing my nursing career?

Many colleges and universities offer joint-degree programs, such as a master's degree in nursing combined with a master's degree in business administration. A program such as this prepares you for a senior-level administrative position. Dual degree programs vary by school. Therefore, it is important that you explore the different options available.

## How can I obtain financial support for my graduate nursing education?

Begin your search for financial support by checking with your employer to determine whether tuition reimbursement is included in your employment benefit package. You can also apply directly for funding through a variety of federal programs. Explore scholarship, graduate assistantship, and other financial aid opportunities through the school(s) to which you are applying. It is important to visit the school's financial aid department website to assess the available funding opportunities and your eligibility.

## TIP: These are resources that may help you identify sources of financial support:

- **Bureau of Health Workforce Loan Repayment Programs for Nurses:**  
<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing/bcrloanrepaymentfactsheet.pdf>
- **Federal Student Aid:**  
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/>
- **Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) Health Workforce Scholarships and Loans:**  
<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/scholarshipsloans/>
- **HRSA NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program:**  
<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing/>
- **HRSA NURSE Corps Scholarship Program:**  
<http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/scholarships/nursing/>
- **U.S. Department of Education Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program:**  
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service>
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Health Services Corps:**  
<http://www.nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/>
- **Use These 5 Strategies to Pay for Graduate School:**  
<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/paying/articles/2013/03/12/use-these-5-strategies-to-pay-for-graduate-school>

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## Chapter 6

# Growth as a Nurse Leader

*“Since graduating from the accelerated nursing program, I have been employed as a research nurse in the areas of HIV and oncology. I never envisioned that nursing research would be my career.... Today, I am thriving in my position as a nurse researcher, leading research in my department, and traveling across the country to represent my institution at clinical trial investigation meetings.”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2011*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with information to guide and prepare your development as a nurse leader.

### Why is reflection important in my growth as a nurse leader?

*“I believe that self-reflection is very important as a means of improving ourselves as nurses. It makes us more aware of our actions so that we can improve and become better care providers.”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2010*

Reflection involves “serious thinking or careful consideration” (see <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/reflection>). Self-reflection is important to engage in gratifying, meaningful nursing practice (Olsen, 2014). Sherwood and Horton-Deutsch (2012) state that reflection enhances a nurse’s leadership potential through the development of a deeper self-awareness, an increased understanding of one’s own experiences, and a broader perspective about the thoughts and behaviors of others. As a result, reflective leadership can improve communication, decision-making, and critical thinking skills, which can help the nurse to attain professional and organizational goals (Horton-Deutsch, 2013). As nurses we learn from critically appraising our thoughts and experiences through the process of self-reflection.

#### **TIP: Kim, Clabo, Burbank, Leveillee, and Martins (2010) recommend that you ask yourself these reflective questions:**

- At the time, what did I believe guided my actions (or inactions)?
- Looking back now, what do I think guided my actions?
- What values or ethical standards guided my actions?
- Were my intentions consistent with the patient’s goals?
- Why did I carry out the actions as I did?
- Were my actions in this situation the best, most appropriate, and most successful ones possible?
- Did I use my knowledge appropriately?

**“ Great leaders don’t set out to be a leader...they set out to make a difference. It’s never about the role—always about the goal. ”**  
**– Lisa Haisha**

- What were the critical factors that got in the way of doing a better job, and why?
- How could I change my practice in the future?
- What situation made me feel uncomfortable or triggered my emotions somehow?
- Did a clinical situation seem significant to me in some way?
- Did I ask myself, “Did I miss something?”
- What could I have done differently?
- Did I experience a critical [traumatic] incident?
- Would I like a deeper understanding of a situation that I found interesting?

## How does networking continue to build my nursing career?

According to Cardillo (2015), you should start networking while you are still a student, and you need to stay in touch with your fellow students and your instructors following graduation. She also advises you to: 1) join a professional organization and attend events, meetings, and conferences related to your career goals; 2) be sure to ask for the business card of anyone you speak with so you can contact him or her at a later date; and 3) have professional-looking business cards made for yourself while you are a student. Cardillo recommends that you carry your business cards with you at all times.

If you are at an event where you are meeting prospective employers, you should be prepared to share copies of your updated résumé. Cardillo (2015) endorses using social networking sites such as LinkedIn and listservs in professional organizations to broaden your networks (see Chapter 1).

## What questions should I ask in a networking environment?

Networking is a skill that you need to cultivate. Here are some questions from Rose O. Sherman (2012) that may help you to get a conversation started:

- How did you get started in nursing leadership?
- What do you enjoy most in your role?
- What are your challenges?
- What significant changes are you seeing in your environment?
- What is the most innovative thing that is happening in your organization?
- What do you think will happen with health care reform?
- What trends do you see happening in nursing today?
- What advice would you give to an emerging nurse leader?

**TIP: Read the blog by Rose O. Sherman on The Power of Leadership Networking at <http://www.emergingnleader.com/networkinginnursing/>**

## **What is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing Scholars Network? How will it help me grow as a leader?**

The RWJF NCIN Scholars Network was formed in October 2012 to assist scholars in their professional growth through peer leadership development and mentoring activities. The network provides an opportunity for RWJF NCIN scholars to connect with their peers and also provides a platform for sharing information, resources, skill sets, and discussions of key issues that scholars may face. Connectivity within the cohort groups is facilitated through online electronic communications.

All scholars are encouraged to join and become active members of the network at <http://www.newcareersinnursing.org/scholars/login>

The NCIN Scholars Network may also be found on Facebook at New Careers in Nursing at <https://www.facebook.com/NewCareersinNursing>.

**Tip: See other RWJF NCIN scholar resources at <http://www.NewCareersinNursing.org/scholars>**

## **How can membership in a professional nursing organization help me to network and grow professionally?**

*“I think it is very important as a nurse to belong to a nursing organization. As a member of a professional association, you have plenty of networking opportunities.”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar Alumnus 2012*

There are many nursing organizations you can join at the state, national, and international levels. These associations can offer you career information, continuing education credit, networking opportunities, and other resources to meet your professional needs regardless of your specialty.

## **What benefits can I gain from belonging to a professional nursing organization?**

Professional nursing organizations at the national and local chapter levels provide opportunities to connect with your peers and colleagues. You can share best practice approaches and learn about new trends, education, and technical advances. Generally, nursing associations have websites that you can visit and explore.

**TIP: The following website identifies the benefits of joining professional nursing organizations:** [http://journals.lww.com/nursing/fulltext/2005/09001/why\\_join\\_a\\_professional\\_nursing\\_organization\\_.6.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/nursing/fulltext/2005/09001/why_join_a_professional_nursing_organization_.6.aspx)

## What are some professional nursing organizations? Where can I find a list?

The **American Nurses Association (ANA)** acts on behalf of our nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its state nurses associations, constituents, and affiliated organizations (see <http://www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/AboutANA>).

Below are a few international nursing associations that you can explore.

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a coalition of more than 130 national nurses associations consisting of more than 16 million nurses globally. Founded in 1899, it is the first global organization for health professionals (see <http://www.icn.ch/who-we-are/who-we-are/>).

The **International Nurses Association (INA)** is an expanding, global nursing organization whose mission is “to bring together outstanding nurses from all specialties and backgrounds” (see <http://www.inanurse.com/>).

**TIP: A list of nursing organizations is available at** <http://www.nurse.org/orgs.shtml>

**TIP: Listings of international nursing organizations are available from the sources below.**

- **nursetogether.com:**  
<http://www.nursetogether.com/list-of-global-nursing-organizations>.
- **Sigma Theta Tau International:**  
<http://www.nursingsociety.org/GlobalAction/organizations/Pages/InternationalNursingOrganizations.aspx>

## What role can nonprofits play in my leadership development?

A nonprofit organization “conducts business for the benefit of the general public without shareholders and without a profit motive” (see <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Non-profit+organization>). According to Santiago (2015), working in the nonprofit sector or serving on a nonprofit board can help you to gain new expertise, and it can be very rewarding. Furthermore, she states you can utilize your professional expertise to increase the organization's impact and influence.

## **TIP: The websites listed below are nonprofit organizations that you can explore.**

- **Medical Jobs in Non-Profit Organizations:**  
<http://healthcareers.about.com/od/wheretowork/p/Non-ProfitOrg.htm>
- **Nonprofit Boards: How to Find a Rewarding Board Position:**  
<http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Nonprofit-Boards/Find-and-Join-a-Nonprofit-Board/How-Find-Rewarding-Board-Position.aspx#.VRXYOvnF>
- **Top 100 Nonprofits on the Web:**  
<http://topnonprofits.com/lists/best-nonprofits-on-the-web/>

## **Where can I volunteer to develop myself as a nurse leader? How do I start?**

*“I am interested in volunteering and giving back to society.  
Where can I find these opportunities?”*

*RWJF NCIN Scholar 2013*

### **Disaster relief volunteering**

The ANA (2015) recommends registering to volunteer with an emergency response organization or registry before a disaster strikes, as this: 1) allows your licensure to be pre-validated, 2) provides you with emergency response training, and 3) permits you to be deployed more readily. The ANA also advises that it is essential to consider your work and family responsibilities when choosing an emergency response organization or registry.

## **TIP: Explore these disaster relief volunteer opportunities based in the United States:**

- **Community Emergency Response Team:**  
<https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>
- **American Red Cross:**  
<http://www.redcross.org/support/volunteer>
- **Medical Reserve Corps:**  
[www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov)
- **Local Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT):**  
<http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/responders/ndms/teams/Pages/dmat.aspx>
- **Emergency System of Advanced Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP):**  
<http://www.phe.gov/esarvhp/Pages/more-volunteer-opportunities.aspx>

### **TIP: Review the international disaster relief volunteer opportunities listed below:**

- **International Medical Relief:**  
<http://www.internationalmedicalrelief.org/>
- **International Committee of the Red Cross:**  
<https://www.icrc.org>
- **Relief International:**  
[http://www.ri.org/get\\_involved/volunteer-and-internships.php](http://www.ri.org/get_involved/volunteer-and-internships.php)

### **Other volunteer opportunities**

There are many organizations looking for volunteers. Make sure to check the safety, authenticity, and legitimacy of any group before making a commitment. Here are some reputable volunteer opportunities for you to explore:

- **Cross-Cultural Solutions:**  
[www.CrossCulturalSolutions.org](http://www.CrossCulturalSolutions.org)
- **Doctors Without Borders:**  
<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/work-with-us>
- **Humana People to People:**  
<http://www.humana.org/Participation/development-instructor>
- **The Institute for International Cooperation and Development:**  
<http://www.iicd-volunteer.org/>
- **Peace Corps:**  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/>
- **South American Explorers Volunteer Opportunities:**  
<http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/enroll>
- **Habitat for Humanity International:**  
<https://share.habitat.org/>
- **Corporation for National and Community Service:**  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/american-corps/american-corps-vista>

**TIP: For more information on volunteer opportunities, go to:** <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

## **Where can I find leadership development programs for nurses?**

### **American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)**

The AACN sets standards, offers resources, and fosters leadership development in nursing education, research, and practice. To learn about AACN leadership development programs for students, faculty, administrators, and deans, go to: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/leadership>.

**“ Success is a journey not a destination. ”**  
**– Arthur Ashe**



**TIP: To become a member of the AACN Leadership Networks, go to:** <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/networks>

### **National League for Nursing (NLN)**

The NLN promotes the continued improvement of nursing education through its activities related to professional development, research, certification, and public policy. For more information on the NLN Leadership Institute for nurse faculty, go to: <http://www.nln.org/professional-development-programs/leadership-programs>

### **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)**

RWJF is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted solely to health, and it is focused on developing new interdisciplinary health leadership programs that enhance opportunities for networking and mentoring. To learn more, go to: <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/features/A-Bold-New-Direction-for-Leadership-Programs.html>

RWJF partnered with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the initiative that led to the landmark report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (IOM, 2010). The report called for a Campaign for Action related to these key recommendations (see <http://CampaignforAction.org/>):

- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.
- Nurses should be full partners with physicians and other health care professionals in redesigning health care in the United States.
- Effective workforce planning and policymaking require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure (IOM, 2010).

**TIP: To learn about resources for advancing nursing leadership in relation to the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, go to** <http://www.CampaignforAction.org/>

### **Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI)**

Sigma Theta Tau International is the honor society of nursing whose mission is to advance global health and to raise awareness regarding “nursing excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service” (see <http://www.nursingsociety.org/aboutus/mission/Pages/factsheet.aspx>).

The STTI Leadership Institute offers the following programs for members:

- Maternal Child Health
- Maternal Child Health in Africa
- Geriatric Nursing Leadership
- Nurse Faculty Leadership
- Board Leadership Institute
- Leadership Development Center

**TIP: For further information on the STTI Leadership Institute's programs, go to:** <http://www.nursingsociety.org/LeadershipInstitute/Pages/default.aspx>

## How will reading professional journals help my growth as a nurse leader? Where can I find free journal subscriptions online?

Whether you are a student, a newly licensed nurse, or an experienced nurse, you can develop yourself as a nursing leader by reading professional journals. Reading professional journals keeps you informed about evidence-based practice guidelines, new advances, and current issues in nursing and health care. As a future leader, you must remain committed to lifelong learning and professional growth. If you join a professional association, membership often includes a subscription to an online and/or print journal.

**TIP: For a list of nursing journals, go to:** <http://nursingschool.org/ultimate-list-of-nursing-journals/>

**TIP: You can find online nursing journals free of charge at:**

- **Advance Healthcare Network for Nurses:**  
<http://nursing.advanceweb.com/>
- **Medscape Nurses:**  
<http://www.medscape.com/nurses/journals>
- **Nurse.com:**  
<http://www.nurse.com/>

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