

**MINUTES OF THE TELECONFERENCE MEETING**  
**NEBRASKA CENTER FOR NURSING**  
**February 19, 2021**

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing (CFN) Board was called to order by Lisa Walters, Chair, on February 19, 2021, at 9:32 a.m. The central meeting location was at the Nebraska State Office Building, Room 3D, Lincoln NE 68508. Members participated via teleconference. Copies of the agenda were distributed in advance to the Board members on February 10, 2021, posted outside the Licensure Unit within the Nebraska State Office Building on February 10, 2021, and posted on the Department of Health and Human Services website on February 10, 2021, 2020. Staff announced the location of a current copy of the Open Meetings Act within the room.

**Roll Call**

The following Board members answered roll call via teleconference:

- Lina Bostwick
- Kathy Bowman
- Suzanne Deyke
- Ronda Ehly
- Christi Glesmann
- Kathy Harrison
- Lisa Walters
- Laura Weber

A quorum was not present. No business was conducted until Joan Nelson joined the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

The following Board members joined the meeting after roll call: Joan Nelson (joined at 9:36 a.m.), Beth Burbach (joined at 9:53 a.m.), and Charity Ebert (joined at 10:03 a.m.).

The following Board members were absent: Tamara Allen, Sheila Bjerrum, and Dorothy Scrivner.

Two Board positions were vacant.

The following staff member was present: Ann Oertwich, Program Manager.

The following staff members attended via teleconference:

- Sherri Joyner *Health Licensing Specialist*
- Kathy Hoebelheinrich, *Nursing Practice Consultant*
- Jacci Reznicek, *Nursing Education Consultant*
- Juan Ramirez, PhD, *Independent Consultant*

**Adoption of the Agenda**

**Motion:** Glesmann made the motion, seconded by Bostwick, to adopt the agenda for the February 19, 2021, meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

Voting Yes: Bostwick, Bowman, Deyke, Ehly, Glesmann, Harrison, Nelson, Walters, and Weber.

Voting No: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Allen, Bjerrum, Burbach, Ebert, and Scrivner. Motion carried.

**Approval of the Minutes**

**Motion:** Glesmann made the motion, seconded by Ehly, to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2020, meeting of the Center for Nursing Board.

These minutes have not been approved by the  
Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

Voting Yes: Bostwick, Bowman, Deyke, Ehly, Glesmann, Harrison, Nelson, Walters, and Weber.  
Voting No: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Allen, Bjerrum, Burbach, Ebert, and Scrivner. Motion carried.

### **Social Media Reports**

Glesmann reported that the Center's Facebook page has 1,100 followers. The highest number of views tend to occur around 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Posts about the Center for Nursing's specialty license plates generate the most interest. 623 people engaged with the most recent post about the license plates.

Ramirez reported that in 2020, a total of 6,938 unique visitors viewed the Center for Nursing's website. There was an average of 578 unique visitors per month in 2020, which is a significant increase from 2019, when the site averaged 282 unique visitors per month. 33.85% of all page views in 2020 were for COVID-19 resources. Ramirez said that he had contacted the website provider about moving the Facebook link to make it more prominent, but that he has not yet received a reply.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Nursing Licensure**

Oertwich reported that approximately 5,055 RNs have renewed since the site was opened in late January. Renewal at this time, however, is voluntary. Renewal will not be required until after the Governor lifts the emergency declared for COVID-19. The deferred renewal, however, will not change the next expiration date. When RNs renew this year, the expiration date on their licenses will be updated to October 31, 2022.

Walters reported that some nurses are concerned about meeting continuing education requirements. Oertwich said that RNs can request a waiver of the continuing education requirement when they renew.

*9:53 a.m. Burbach joined the meeting.*

Oertwich reported that the Governor signed an additional Executive Order, EO 20-37, which extends the Licensure Unit's authority to issue licenses to persons who have not yet taken their licensing exam. Provisional licenses that have been issued to new RN and LPN program graduates were originally due to expire on December 31, 2021. With EO-20-37, provisional licenses can be issued to new graduates for the duration of the COVID-10 emergency. Since the COVID-19 emergency was declared, the Licensure Unit has issued over 1,500 provisional licenses to new RN and LPN graduates before they passed NCLEX and over 100 temporary licenses to APRN grads who had not yet taken their certifying examination. Over 80 RN and LPN licenses have also been reinstated under Executive Order 20-10, which allows nurses with inactive or expired licenses to reinstate without meeting the continuing competency requirement.

Glesmann asked if the issuance of provisional licenses has affected NCLEX pass rates. Oertwich said that she did not have the data for a conclusive answer. Oertwich did note that the longer graduates wait after graduation to take NCLEX, the less likely they are to pass the exam. Last spring, when testing centers closed down or had reduced capacity due to COVID-19, Pearson VUE extended the testing window for applicants to one year. Licensure Unit staff have heard from people with provisional licenses who indicated that they were delaying taking NCLEX because they would lose

their provisional licenses and would need to stop working in nursing roles if they did not pass the exam. Nebraska has recently changed the testing window back to 90 days.

Deyke noted that the licensure waivers that were enacted due to COVID-19, such as allowing persons who were licensed in another state to work in Nebraska, surprised surveyors who visited her facility for a mock Joint Commission survey. Oertwich noted that similar problems were created when the expiration dates on Nebraska health profession licenses were briefly changed to 00/00/0000.

10:03 a.m. *Ebert joined the meeting.*

### **Center for Nursing Foundation Report**

Bostwick reported that the Foundation has a new member, Charlotte Liggett, who represents the Nebraska Assembly of Nursing Deans and Directors. Amberly Wagner-Connolly, from the Nebraska Action Coalition, has joined as a non-voting member. The Foundation is looking for a representative from the Board of Nursing as Rita Thalken is no longer serving on the Foundation Board. The Foundation has not been able to find an LPN member. Oertwich recommended reaching out to Heath Boddy from the Nebraska Health Care Association, which sponsor the Nebraska LPN Association.

The Foundation has updated its bylaws. They have not yet voted on the statement that will serve as their mission statement. They are still developing a logo.

Bostwick reported that some people who have ordered Center for Nursing specialty license plates have contacted the Foundation about the status of their order, but no one seems to be upset about the wait time. Keychains with a replica of the license plate have been sent to people who have placed orders. Weber asked what people should do if they have changed vehicles since they originally placed their order. Bostwick said they should submit an updated application. Bostwick reported that the Nebraska Hospital Association has purchased license plates for its vehicles. Members noted that the license plates could be promoted as graduation gift or as a gift for Nurses Week in May

### **Foundation Study: Assessing the Needs of Rural Nurses**

Bostwick reported that she, Ramirez, and Theresa Delahoyde have been meeting weekly to develop measures and smart goals for the Foundation's study on the needs of rural nurses. They will publish their second article about the study in *Nursing News*. They will also do a presentation at a Bryan Health colloquium. They hope the study will help serve as a call to action to provide better educational resources to rural nurses. The Foundation plans to write a grant based on the needs revealed by the study.

They have found that nurses in rural areas face particular challenges in obtaining continuing education. The expense and time involved in traveling to sites where educational programs are can pose a barrier. Because rural facilities are often short staffed, it can be harder for nurses to take time off for continuing education events. In the survey, rural nurses identified that they particularly need educational resources in the areas of 1) mental health, 2) trauma, and 3) diabetes. Because it is not uncommon in rural settings for nurses with associate degrees to be placed in leadership roles, there is also a need for education on topics such as finance and management.

The Foundation's survey also asked rural nurses about COVID-19. Bostwick reported that the results show a clear theme. Nurses in rural areas reported that they did not have the PPE and the staff that

they needed, and that there were serious deficiencies in communication and consistent policies regarding COVID-19.

Burbach asked how persons interested in seeing the data from the survey might be able to access it. Bostwick said she would need to check with her employer because the study was approved by her employer's IRB (Institutional Review Board).

### **Board of Nursing/EMS Board Survey**

Hoebelheinrich reported that Board of Nursing and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Board issued a joint statement in response to the changes that went into effect last summer due to LB 1002. With these changes, EMTs can work in hospitals. EMTs working in hospitals will be directed by RNs, similarly to how LPNs are directed by RNs. Another change made by LB 1002 is that LPNs who serve on EMS squads are no longer exempt from EMS licensure requirements. The Center for Nursing conducted a survey on behalf of the Board of Nursing and EMS Board to assess the needs of the LPNs affected by the change. Hoebelheinrich reported that the DHHS EMS Program has resources available to help LPNs obtain EMT licensure, including providing reimbursement for up to 75% of education costs.

Weber suggested publishing an article in *Nursing News* about practice issues that could arise when RNs direct EMTs. Oertwich thought it would be helpful to show how some places are implementing the changes. She also noted that in some critical access hospitals nurses ride on EMS squads.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Nursing News – Oertwich reported that the next edition of *Nursing News* will include an article about the Foundation's rural nursing study and a promotional item for the Center's specialty license plates. She expects the edition will be mailed out in mid-March.

Biennial Report – Oertwich reported that the Biennial Reports have not yet been distributed. Bostwick offered to help distribute the reports to State Legislators.

New Members – Oertwich said that she was told that no new appointments would be made to the Board until after the Legislature goes into session. Monica Gissler has emailed those members whose first full terms end in June 2021 about whether they plan to apply for a second term.

New Licensing System – Oertwich reported that the Licensure Unit is working with a vendor to develop a new licensing system. The new system will allow applicants to submit applications online, and will enable improvements to license lookup website used by the public. Oertwich also hopes that the new system will allow for uploading Nebraska's APRN license information and nursing workforce data to Nursys. Glesmann suggested that the new system include an option for nursing applicants who are requesting accommodations for licensing exams.

### **Strategic Planning**

Walters reported that the Board's strategic plan had a good, basic framework, but that she would like more details under each goal. Walters said she would prefer that the Board hold a meeting specifically for strategic planning so that they can work out details over an extended length of time.

## **COVID-19 Environmental Scan**

Bostwich reported that all students at her nursing program have returned to in-person instruction.

Bowman reported that her facility, which previously converted its entire ICU to a closed COVID-19 unit, now has only four beds specifically for COVID patients.

Burbach reported that COVID has become a way of life; people have adapted and are in it for the long haul. One issue that her program has addressed is determining what information and equipment they need to provide to students so that they can safely care for COVID patients.

Deyke also reported the COVID has become the new normal. Her facility is decommissioning some areas that had been designated for COVID patients.

Ebert reported that at her organization all staff in Lancaster County have been vaccinated. The organization is looking into doing vaccinations for homebound individuals in association with Meals on Wheels. They are also working on a plan to enhance communications and connections with staff that provide home care services. Although they have fewer COVID-19 cases, the acuity of patients is a bit higher, which is perhaps due to hesitancy about going into a facility during the COVID crisis.

Ehly reported that her facility has gone from 26 to 10 COVID beds. They are providing monoclonal antibody infusions, which along with a mask mandate, seems to correlate with a reduction in length of hospital stays. Ehly reported that staff are stressed and tired, and that she is beginning to see signs of PTSD among health care workers dealing with the crisis.

Glesmann reported that her nursing program is also settling in to the new normal. The school's biggest challenge is finding enough classroom space to conduct classes with sufficient social spacing among students. They have started working with Douglas County Health Department on a plan to get their students vaccinated.

Harrison also reported challenges in finding enough space to get all nursing students back to in-person classes. Her program was able to get their students vaccinated, and students are now caring for COVID-19 patients.

Nelson reported that her facility is seeing post-COVID patients who need extensive rehabilitation. Most staff have been fully vaccinated, but the facility is still doing daily temperature checks.

Walters reported that her school has experienced a very low rate of COVID-19 among students and staff. For those who did contract the virus, it appears to have been contracted through community transmission rather than from school-related contacts. Most students still attend classes via Zoom. She has heard many complaints from community members about mask requirements.

Weber reported that the clinic where she works is encouraging patients in Lancaster County to register with the Health Department for vaccinations. Many of their patients are already vaccinated. They expect that all of their staff will be vaccinated by March.

## **Conclusion**

The meeting concluded at 11:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sherri Joyner  
Health Licensing Coordinator