

**MINUTES OF THE TELECONFERENCE MEETING**  
**NEBRASKA CENTER FOR NURSING**  
**April 23, 2021**

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing (CFN) Board was called to order by Lisa Walters, Chair, on April 23, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. The central meeting location was at the Licensure Unit Conference Room, Nebraska State Office Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Lincoln NE 68508. Members participated via teleconference. Copies of the agenda were distributed in advance to the Board members on April 15, 2021, posted outside the Licensure Unit within the Nebraska State Office Building on April 15, 2021, and posted on the Department of Health and Human Services website on April 15, 2021. 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:

- Sheila Bjerrum
- Kathy Bowman
- Beth Burbach
- Suzanne Deyke
- Charity Ebert
- Ronda Ehly
- Christi Glesmann
- Joan Nelson
- Lisa Walters
- Laura Weber

A quorum was present.

The following Board members joined the meeting after roll call: Tamara Allen (joined at 9:32 a.m.), Lina Bostwick (joined at 9:35 a.m.), and Kathy Harrison (joined at 10:25 a.m.).

The following Board member was absent: Dorothy Scrivner.

Two Board positions were vacant.

The following staff members were present: Ann Oertwich, *Program Manager*, and Sherri Joyner, *Health Licensing Specialist*.

The following staff members attended via teleconference:

- Kathy Hoebelheinrich, *Nursing Practice Consultant*
- Jacci Reznicek, *Nursing Education Consultant*
- Juan Ramirez, PhD, *Independent Consultant*

Amberly Wagner-Connolly from the Nebraska Action Coalition also attended the meeting.

**Adoption of the Agenda**

**Motion:** Deyke made the motion, seconded by Ebert, to adopt the agenda for the April 23, 2021, meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

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

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

### **Approval of the Minutes**

**Motion:** Nelson made the motion, seconded by Glesmann, to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2021, meeting of the Center for Nursing Board.

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

### **Budget Status Report**

Oertwich reported that the Center has spent a little under \$58,000.00 for the current fiscal year. Due to cancellation of in-person meetings and events, this amount is considerably less than the Center's \$130,000.00 budget. The major expenses have been for maintenance for the Center's website, annual dues to the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers, and the salary for Juan Ramirez, the Center's statistical consultant.

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

Bostwick reported that the Foundation is continuing its study on the needs of rural nurses. The outcome of their first survey was that rural nurses need educational resources on the topics of mental health, diabetes, and trauma. They are preparing to send out another survey to collect a more detailed picture of these needs. Ramirez said they are also developing open-ended questions regarding the current pandemic and other crisis preparation issues.

Bostwick reported that the Foundation has received 204 applications for the Center's specialty license plates. The Foundation needs 46 more applications before the license plates will be manufactured. Walters, noting the availability of funds in the Center's budget, suggested buying newspaper ads for the joint purpose of honoring nurses during National Nurses Week and publicizing the Center's license plates. Oertwich thought \$5,000.00 was a reasonable amount. Allen suggested contacting the Nebraska Press Association, which can place advertisements in newspapers throughout Nebraska. Bostwick said she will work on drafting publicity materials, and that she will submit the materials to Walters and Oertwich for approval.

### **COVID-19 Licensing Waivers**

Oertwich reported that since the Executive Orders granting waivers of certain licensing requirements went into effect, approximately 80 nursing licenses have been reinstated to persons who asked for waivers of the continuing competency requirements, and over 2,000 provisional and temporary licenses have been issued to LPNs, RNs, and APRNs, who have not yet taken the required licensing examination.

Joyner explained that new RN and LPN graduates will be issued a provisional license once the Licensure Unit receives an applicant's complete application, including court records if applicable, official final transcripts, verification that the applicant has submitted fingerprints to the state patrol, and verification that the applicant has registered for NCLEX. Reznicek explained that new graduates are encouraged to take NCLEX as soon as feasible. The time window for candidates to test after Nebraska approves the eligibility had been changed without Nebraska's knowledge from 90 days to one year, which led some provisional license holders to delay scheduling a test date. Reznicek reported that the window for testing has been changed back to 90 days.

Approximately 14,000 RNs (out of approximately 33,000) have renewed their licenses. Renewal for RNs is still optional. Oertwich reported that it is not known when the executive order deferring renewal will be lifted. It is expected that LPNs will begin renewing in September.

*10:00 a.m. Ebert left the meeting.*

### **Supporting Nurses Post-COVID**

Cindy Horning from the American Federation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) spoke about the resources her organization has to help address trauma among health care workers. They would like to get resources out to all nurses in Nebraska. She reported that her organization is based on four pillars: 1) research on ways to save lives, such as medication and self-care, 2) advocacy, such as supporting a bill in the Nebraska legislature to have a phone number for suicide prevention resources placed on the back of student id badges, 3) prevention education, such as their Talk Save Lives presentations, and 4) resources for loss and healing, such as peer-to-peer counselors for people who have experienced losses.

Horning and board members discussed how the COVID-10 pandemic has created a mental health crisis in nursing. Horning said that she is aware of nurses who have left the profession due to the pandemic. Horning noted that in a recent Talk Saves Lives presentation, 80% of the questions were about pandemic-related PTSD.

Horning reported that the AFSP is finding it particularly difficult to provide resources to long term care facilities. Some facilities are closed to outside visitors. Another facility told her that staff are so overworked that they do not have any time to attend a presentation. Oertwich said she would send Horning contact information for the Nebraska Health Care Association and LeadingAge. Horning said she would also like contacts for organizations that serve rural areas.

Walters thought that AFSP resources could be posted to the Center's website. Oertwich suggested doing an AFSP presentation via the Center's Facebook page. Horning said that she was willing to partner with the Center for a live presentation, but that presentations cannot be recorded.

*10:25 a.m. Harrison joined the meeting.*

Wagner-Connolly said that a Talk Saves Lives or other AFSP presentation might be incorporated into the Nebraska Action Coalition's fall conference.

Walters noted that even though it was not possible to record a presentation, it would be valuable to make some version available to nurses. Nelson and Glesmann suggested that it might be feasible to have nurses submit questions in advance and then present the questions anonymously during a recorded event. Walters said it might give health care workers an opportunity to express themselves.

Bostwick said that outreach might need to be tailored to different communities. Mental health issues and suicide risks among farmers, who tend to be stoic, might appear differently than among the larger population.

Oertwich asked Board members to email her their ideas so that the Center can formulate a plan. Oertwich suggested that the plan might have three parts: 1) education on self-care for frontline

workers, 2) resources for emergency room staff, who are often the first contact for traumatized individuals, and 3) education for health care workers statewide on the signs of suicide risk.

Walters noted that Steven Wengel from UNMC will speak at the Center's June Board meeting on supporting the mental health needs of nurses.

### **Nebraska Hospital Association**

Andy Hale from the Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) spoke with the Board about the NHA's proposal to create a working group to address nursing shortages. Margaret Woeppel and David Slattery from the NHA also participated. They would like the working group to include representatives from the Center for Nursing, the Board of Nursing, nursing education programs, and hospital human resources offices. The goal of the group will be to identify barriers that might be remediated through legislative changes. Woeppel said that they realize they cannot solve nursing shortages right way, but that they wish to gather information in order to develop advocacy strategies.

Oertwich said that merely getting more students into nursing programs will not necessarily solve nursing shortages. Support also has to be provided to retain existing nurses. Oertwich said that many qualified nurses are driven out of the profession by toxic workplace cultures and poor leadership.

Walters noted that there were barriers to admitting more students to nursing programs. Programs do not have enough faculty and they do not have enough sites for students to do clinicals. She would like to see more data on how many slots in nursing programs go unfilled and how many qualified students get turned away. Walters also noted that pay for nursing faculty is significantly less than what nurses with advanced degrees can earn elsewhere. Bostwick said that many faculty members are currently burned out or highly stressed due to COVID. Burbach said that grants and scholarships to students might help smaller, private nursing programs expand. Burbach, noting that some of the best nurses leave the bedside to pursue additional education, said that there also needed to be a way to support the whole hospital team. Bostwick said that it was important to have nurses with MSNs at the bedside because of the leadership and teaching skills that they can provide.

Woeppel asked if data was available to support these ideas. Ramirez described the data available from the Center for Nursing. The Center has a large set of longitudinal data on the Nebraska nursing workforce from 2000 to 2018. The Center also has a workforce model based on the Department of Labor's nine economic regions for Nebraska. Ramirez said that the supply data from the model can be filtered down to the zip code level. The Center does not, however, gather detailed data on nursing faculty. Reznicek said that pre-licensure nursing programs in Nebraska are required to complete a report and survey annually. Questions can be added to the survey to gather additional data on nursing faculty. Walters said that it would also be helpful if hospitals would share data on their nursing turnover rates with the Center.

Hale said that COVID-19 monies might be available to help fund activities that emerge from the working group. The NHA would like the working group to develop tangible outcomes. The expectation is that the working group will meeting monthly for approximately one hour or 90 minutes for the remainder of 2021. Hale said he would get in touch will the Center again in mid-May.

Oertwich said that a misperception that anyone can be a nurse leads to higher attrition rates in nursing education programs and nursing employment. Harrison reported that her program has received

criticism for not accepting students who did not meet academic qualifications. She also noted that the quality of clinical instruction would be negatively impacted by increasing the student-to-faculty ratio for clinicals or by not having standards for nurses who precept students. Deyke noted that teaching is a gift, and that not all nurses can serve effectively in teaching roles. She also agreed that programs need to vet the students admitted to their programs.

Glesmann reported that her program fills 100% of its available slots for incoming students, but that the retention rate is 70% to 80%. She said that students who have the ability to become good nurses drop out of the program because of time and money barriers. She thinks scholarships would help retain these students.

Wagner-Connolly said that it would be helpful to assess what drives nurses to leave the profession during their first years of practice.

### **Social Media Reports**

Glesmann said that she would send an email to Board members with an update on the Center's Facebook page. Ramirez reported that a link to the Facebook page has been moved to a more prominent position on the Center's website.

### **Communication & Environmental Scan**

[These items were not covered during the meeting due to time constraints.]

### **Conclusion**

Walters asked if a motion should be made to approve the decision to purchase newspaper ad space.

**Motion:** Deyke made the motion, seconded by Burbach, to approve having Bostwick collaborate with the Center for Nursing Foundation to develop a public relations campaign to be approved by Oertwich and Walters and to not exceed \$5,000.00.

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

The meeting concluded at 11:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sherri Joyner  
Health Licensing Coordinator