

MINUTES OF THE VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING
NEBRASKA CENTER FOR NURSING
September 17, 2021

Call to Order

The meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing (CFN) Board was called to order by Lisa Walters, Chair, on September 17, 2021, at 9:32 a.m. The central meeting location was at the Nebraska State Office Building, Room 3C, Lincoln NE 68508. Members participated via teleconference. Copies of the agenda were distributed in advance to the Board members on September 7, 2021, posted outside the Licensure Unit within the Nebraska State Office Building on September 7, 2021, and posted on the Department of Health and Human Services website on September 7, 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:

- Tamara Allen
- Lina Bostwick
- Kathy Bowman
- Beth Burbach
- Suszanne Deyke
- Ronda Ehly
- Christi Glesmann
- Kathy Harrison
- Lisa Walters
- Laura Weber

A quorum was present.

The following Board member joined the meeting after roll call: Joan Nelson.

The following Board members were absent: Sheila Bjerrum and Charity Ebert.

Three Board positions were vacant.

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

The following staff members attended via teleconference:

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

Adoption of the Agenda

Motion: Deyke made the motion, seconded by Bostwick, to adopt the agenda for the September 17, 2021, meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

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

Approval of the Minutes

Motion: Burbach made the motion, seconded by Allen, to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2021, meeting of the Center for Nursing Board.

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

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

Budget Report

Oertwich reported that the Center was allocated \$140,000 for the 2021-22 Fiscal Year. This is the same amount it was allocated for the previous fiscal year. Due to cancellation of in-person meetings because of COVID-19, the Center only spent \$70,000 during the previous fiscal year. The salary for Ramirez was the largest expense. Other expenditures include \$500 for membership dues to the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers and \$500 for co-sponsorship of the Nebraska Action Coalition's Fall Conference.

Nursing Focus Groups

Oertwich reported that the Department of Health and Human Services allocated an additional \$75,000 to the Center for Nursing for the purpose of conducting focus groups with practicing nurses. The goal of the focus groups is to help identify solutions to the nursing workforce shortage. Oertwich said that without more input from practicing nurses, she was concerned that proposals to alleviate the nursing shortage will once again focus simply on producing more nurses, rather than changing the workplace culture that drives nurses to leave the profession. She noted that the last time similar focus groups were conducted in Nebraska was in 1998.

Walters said that PTSD is rampant among nurses. They need to find out what the stressors are for nurses and what factors keep nurses at the bedside or drive them away. Oertwich said that she is considering holding the focus groups in coffee shops or similar settings where nurses would feel free to express their true feelings. Walters added that they also want to be clear that the focus groups are not gripe sessions.

Burbach and others pointed out the importance of involving other nursing organizations. Walters and Oertwich have reached out to the Nebraska Board of Nursing and the Nebraska Nurses Association to form a coalition to coordinate the focus groups. Walters said that she would like have the Nebraska Organization of Nurse Leaders (NONL) involved with the project on some level to alleviate concerns that might arise among nurse administrators about the purpose of the focus groups. Ehly, who is a member on NONL, said that the organization wants to see this kind of research get done and would appreciate the focus groups.

Ehly read from the Elements of a Health Practice Environment, a list posted on the website of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL). Walters recommended aligning some of the questions asked during the focus groups with AONL's list.

Burbach said that it was critical for nurses to be actively involved in the process of finding solutions to the workforce crisis. She noted that if the focus groups are structured appropriately, the data would be useful to people across the country.

Bostwick recommended reaching out to Anita Finkelman, a national expert in quality improvement in nursing, for ideas that could be incorporated into the focus groups..

Walters said that she would love to have Board members attend the focus groups in their areas and also help with organizing the meetings, if they wished. Burbach, Glesmann, Allen, and others expressed interest in helping out.

10:00 a.m. Glesmann left the meeting.

HRSA Grant for Workforce Resiliency

Walters described the background for the Center's current application for a HRSA grant for nursing resiliency training. The Center is partnering with the UNMC College of Nursing and the UNMC School of Public Health on the grant. Walters noted that one requirement of the grant is that they be aligned with a university system. The fact that UNMC has done HRSA grants in the past is also helpful. The grant proposal focuses on the needs of nursing students, practicing nurses, and nurse practitioners, especially NPs with a psychiatric specialty. Oertwich said that one component of the grant is to provide funding for critical incident debriefings at rural hospitals.

Burbach said that she understands the time constraints in putting together the grant and that she is glad that Oertwich and Walters were able to find partners. She hoped that when similar opportunities arise in the future, that Board members can be notified sooner. She suggested sending a questionnaire to Board members to assess their interests and experiences so that Board members with expertise in particular areas can be quickly identified.

NHA Healthcare Shortage Workgroup

Oertwich reported the Ramirez presented at a meeting of the Nebraska Hospital Association's task force on the nursing shortage. Ramirez's presentation included data for the "knowns" of the Nebraska nursing workforce along with identifying the "unknowns," such as nursing turnover rates at hospitals and the reasons why nurses left employment. Oertwich said that one positive outcome of the NHA task force is that it has raised awareness that the Center for Nursing is the primary source of data for the nursing workforce in Nebraska.

Center for Nursing Foundation Report

Bostwick reported that the Foundation will meet the following week. They have found it challenging recently to find a mutual time when Foundation Board members were available. Bostwick, noting that Amberly Wagner-Connolly has attended a couple of Foundation Board meetings as a non-voting member, asked about appointing Wagner-Connolly to the Foundation as a representative from NONL. Walters noted that NONL should make the nomination. Ehly said that she would ask that the nomination be put on the agenda for the next NONL meeting.

Bostwick reported that in the previous week the Foundation received eight more applications for the Center's specialty license plates. She thinks that the notice in *Nursing News* and the recent Facebook campaign have spurred these additional applications. The Foundation needs to receive approximately 30 more applications before the license plates go into production. Bostwick is thinking of doing some sort of celebration once the required number of applications is received.

Ramirez and Bostwick gave an update on the Foundation's research project on the educational needs of rural nurses. They have found that their biggest need is for resources on mental health. Bostwick noted that their data comes from nurses working in rural areas throughout the state. Ramirez said

that they are identifying communities with populations under 2,500 as “rural,” but he noted that different publications might use the term “rural” differently.

Oertwich reported the Angela Kula expressed interest in serving as the Board of Nursing’s representative to the Foundation. Oertwich said she would forward Kula’s contact information to Bostwick

10:58 a.m. Glesmann returned to the meeting.

Social Media Reports

Glesmann thanked Oertwich for covering for her recently by posting to the Center’s Facebook page. Glesmann reported that posts about immunization and posts about the Center’s specialty license plate have received the most traffic. Glesmann asked if posting items that include logos for UNMC or the Nebraska Assembly of Nursing Deans and Directors would be acceptable. Oertwich said that she did not see any problems.

Ramirez reported that approximately 52% of visits to the Center’s website are referred to the site from web searches. Another 4% of users are referred to the site from social media posts. Other traffic comes from links to the Center’s website found on the web pages of other organizations, such as DHHS, the Nebraska Hospital Association and the Nebraska Action Coalition.

Meeting Schedule

Joyner reported that the next Center for Nursing meeting, originally scheduled for October 29th, has been tentatively rescheduled to October 20th. Joyner said she will email members a confirmation of the date change. She will also email members potential dates for the Board’s 2022 meeting schedule.

Executive Order 21-12

Oertwich reported that on August 26, 2021, the Governor signed Executive Order 21-12 in response to the healthcare worker shortage. This Executive Order reinstates most of the licensing waivers that were in place while the COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency was in effect. The Nursing Section has resumed issuing provisional licenses to new graduates of RN and LPN programs who have not yet taken their NCLEX exams. The Nursing Section is also issuing “emergency reinstatements” to persons who have inactive or expired nursing licenses and who do not meet the continuing competency standards normally required for reinstatement. Oertwich said she has received more calls regarding emergency reinstatement following the Governor’s press conference for Executive Order 21-12 than she received when the waiver was initially offered in 2020.

Nurse License Renewals

Oertwich reported that approximately 28,000 RNs and 600-700 LPNs have renewed their licenses.

Environmental Scan

Deyke reported on the final meeting of the Nebraska Action Coalition (NAC). The Coalition agreed to dissolve the organization after Amberly Wagner-Connolly reported that given time demands and limited funds, she did not think she could continue as NAC’s Director. After ensuring that all its bills were appropriately paid, NAC sent its remaining funds to the Center for Nursing’s Foundation. Deyke said the Wagner-Connolly had hoped that NAC could coalesce with the Center. She said the

dissolution of NAC is an example of how the nursing working is being pulled in so many directions due to the stresses of COVID-19 and the nursing shortage.

11:30 a.m. Burbach left the meeting.

Glesmann reported that with the exception of a few clinical sites with high risk populations, most clinical sites are allowing nursing students from her program to return. The program has a 100% vaccination rate among students doing clinicals. Given social distancing and other measure to limit the spread of COVID-19, students are still struggling with a sense of belonging.

Bostwick reported that about 5% of the students in her program have requested to be exempted from COVID-19 vaccination requirements. Bostwick and other members expressed that their organizations are still struggling with vaccine exemption questions. Glesmann said her school requires clear documentation from a physician supporting the exemption and that students have to go through the school's ADA office. Bostwick also noted that some students are missing classes because their employers are requiring them to work during their class times due to the workforce shortage.

Nelson reported that she will be placed on on-call status starting October 1st with the National Disaster Medical System. Normally, disaster response teams are called up in the fall to respond to hurricanes, but crews are now also being mobilized to staff hospitals with significant healthcare worker shortages.

Bowman reported that the facility where she works has some units with 100% attrition rates in the previous years. These units are being staffed with travelling nurses. The permanent staff are exhausted.

Allen reported that patients from Lincoln have travelled to Grand Island in order to obtain MRIs because technicians were not available in Lincoln and other areas due to breakthrough cases of COVID-19. She noted that it can be hard to convince the lay public about the importance of getting vaccinated when there are so many breakthrough cases among vaccinated healthcare workers.

Both Allen and Nelson are seeing post-COVID-19 patients being denied reimbursement for rehabilitation and other services needed for COVID-related disorders.

Ehly reported that her facility's beds are full. Their COVID population is younger and not as sick as what they experienced last year. They do not have enough staff to cover all beds, and have 44 positions open in acute care. They also have to keep some patients in the hospital because they cannot find nursing homes that will accept post-COVID cases. Her facility did do a webinar with Steve Wengel, who gave a presentation at the Board's June 18th meeting on stress and resiliency. A discussion is planned with management on how the precepts from Dr. Wengel's presentation can be incorporated into the workplace.

Harrison reported that her school has resumed face-to-face instruction. Masks are optional, and the school is not requiring vaccination.

Hoebelheinrich reported that she has received an increasing number of calls from people with questions about utilizing unlicensed persons in healthcare setting. Callers report that they are looking for ways to use unlicensed persons because they have not been able to find enough nurses.

Reznicek reported that the National Council of State Boards of Nursing plans to publish a position paper soon on COVID-19 vaccination requirements for nursing students. Reznicek also reported that last year nursing students complained about not having enough in-person clinical experiences, but this year she is hearing complaints from students who want more virtual clinicals.

Nelson asked about the DHHS COVID-19 dashboard. She noted that she checks the Johns Hopkins COVID-19 website daily, and has observed that Nebraska's COVID-19 data is only being updated every 3-4 days. Oertwich said that DHHS removed the dashboard after the Governor rescinded the COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency. It is her understanding that the Department is concerned that publishing data from smaller communities could create a breach of privacy.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sherri Joyner
Health Licensing Coordinator