

MINUTES OF THE VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING
NEBRASKA CENTER FOR NURSING
January 21, 2022

Call to Order

The meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing (CFN) Board was called to order by Lisa Walters, Chair, on January 21, 2022, at 9:35 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 January 18, 2022, posted outside the Licensure Unit within the Nebraska State Office Building on January 18, 2022, and posted on the Department of Health and Human Services website on January 18, 2022. Walters announced that a current copy of the Open Meetings Act was available at the central meeting location as well as online using the link listed on the agenda.

Roll Call

The following Board members answered roll call via teleconference:

- Tamara Allen
- Kathy Bowman
- Beth Burbach
- Suzanne Deyke
- Charity Ebert
- Ronda Ehly
- Christi Glesmann
- Kathy Harrison
- Joan Nelson
- Lisa Walters
- Laura Weber

The following Board member joined the meeting after roll call: Lina Bostwick (joined meeting at 9:43 a.m.).

The following Board member was absent: Sheila Bjerrum.

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 videoconference: Kathy Hoebelheinrich, *Nursing Practice Consultant*, Jacci Reznicek, *Nursing Education Consultant*, and Juan Ramirez, PhD, *Independent Consultant*.

Adoption of the Agenda

Motion: Nelson made the motion, seconded by Allen, to adopt the agenda for the January 21, 2022, meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

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

Approval of the Minutes

Motion: Burbach made the motion, seconded by Harrison, to approve the minutes for the December 3, 2021, Center for Nursing Board meeting.

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

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

Public Notification of Board Meetings

Joyner reported that the Department asks boards to make a motion annually at the board's first meeting of the year on how the board will notify the public of its board meeting. The Center for Nursing currently notifies the public of upcoming Board meetings by 1) posting the meeting agenda in the lobby of the Licensure Unit's office in the Nebraska State Office Building, 2) posting the agenda on the DHHS website, 3) emailing the agenda to Board members and to any members of the public who have requested that Board agendas be emailed to them.

Motion: Glesmann made the motion, seconded by Nelson, to continue using the same methods to notify the public of upcoming Board meetings.

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

Walters suggested rearranging agenda by moving the items for Social Media Reports and Center for Nursing Foundation Report to after the presentation on Nebraska Nursing Workforce Data. Members agreed with these changes.

HRSA Grant Application

Walters reported that application for a HRSA grant was approved. Official notice was received the previous day. The grant was awarded to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, and provides \$2 million over three-years to fund projects related to nursing resiliency. Walters said that the Center for Nursing will be responsible for developing some the project's proposals, including resiliency training, critical incident debriefings, and middle management training. The grant team will begin to hold weekly meetings. Oertwich said that they are still waiting for more information in order to determine the specific actions that the Center will need to implement.

9:43 a.m. Bostwick joined the meeting.

Bostwick asked if the grant included resources for rural nurses. Oertwich said that there were points of intersection between the HRSA grant project and the Center for Nursing Foundation's research on rural nursing, such as the focus on mental health nursing.

Focus Groups

Walters reported that the Center's plan to conduct focus groups with frontline nurses has been incorporated into the HRSA grant project. Planning for the focus groups was put on hold while waiting to see if the grant would be approved. Oertwich reported that Alysson Hanish, the principal investigator for the grant, has submitted an IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval request to UNMC so that data obtained from the focus groups can be used for research.

Oertwich said that they were still looking for a platform to hold the focus groups virtually. Walters mentioned that having a platform that includes transcription services would be ideal, but she also noted that participants' feedback will need to be anonymous. Walters brought up the possibility of providing participants with a gift card in appreciation for their time and feedback. Oertwich said she would ask someone in DHHS Accounting to see if that would be allowed.

Walters reviewed some of the draft questions that participants in the focus groups might be asked: What are some of the greatest stressors in your work environments? What keeps you up at night? Do you plan to leave your job or leave the nursing profession? Weber thought it would be useful to ask nurses who are planning to leave their jobs about any factors or changes that could induce them to stay. Bostwick suggested including questions that would address nurses' informal support networks.

Initiatives to Address the Nursing Shortage

Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) Recommendations – Walters reported that NHA has come out with its final report with proposals to address the nursing shortage. The report was distributed to state legislators. Oertwich said that Walters was instrumental in ensuring that feedback from the Center for Nursing was incorporated into the report. Oertwich noted that Jeremy Nordquist, the new NHA Director, began his presentation before the Legislature by citing data collected by the Center for Nursing. Walters said that the report was a good start, but she noted that some of the discussions during the work group assumed that nursing tasks were so simple that the nursing shortage could be solved by simply training non-nursing staff to fill in for nurses.

Workforce Legislation – Oertwich discussed several bills that have been introduced in the Nebraska Legislature that would allocate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies on nursing-related issues. LB1044 would use APRN funds to provide innovation grants to hospitals for the purpose of developing new care delivery models. Oertwich and Walters expressed concerns that the bill might be interpreted by some as an endorsement of using unlicensed staff to perform nursing duties. LB1091, the Nursing Incentive Act, would provide scholarships for people attending nurse aid and LPN programs. Oertwich said that she believed that the fastest way to rebuild the nursing workforce was to provide incentives for people to finish not just LPN programs, but also associate degree RN, and accelerated RN programs. She thought the bill might be amended to include RNs. LB1269 would appropriate ARPA funds for the Rural Health Systems loan repayment program.

Oertwich mentioned that Hoebelheinrich and Ramirez have been working with Tom Rauner from the DHHS Office of Rural Health on the possibility of using more funds to help RNs and LPNs pay back student loans. Oertwich noted that nursing loan repayments from the Office of Rural Health currently go primarily to APRNs.

Hoebelheinrich said that increasing numbers of nurse practitioners are not getting jobs in their certification areas and are being drawn into profitable areas, including some questionable modalities such as stem cell injections. Allen said she does not condone treatments that are not backed up by clinical evidence, but she noted that practitioners in private practice can feel financial pressure to engage in these profitable practices. She noted that private practices have had to raise staff salaries in order to compete with the wages offered by hospitals, and that Medicaid/Medicare reimbursements to private practices are being cut while reimbursements to hospitals have increased.

Nursing Workforce Data

Members reviewed a one-page handout prepared by Ramirez that highlighted some of the Center's nursing workforce data. The handout indicates that Nebraska now has fewer nurses than in 2019. This downturn is the first decrease in the nursing workforce in 20 years. The handout also shows the 79% increase in the number of RN students educated by Nebraska nursing programs since 2003, and the increases in the number of men and minorities in the Nebraska nursing workforce. Oertwich

suggested adding data on the practice areas that are facing the highest shortages. Glesmann thought it might be helpful to have a second flyer rather than placing too much info on one page.

Ramirez presented on the Center's draft 2021 Biennial Report, which shows the findings of the 2021 workplace surveys completed by Nebraska RNs and LPNs during the license renewal process. Ramirez noted that the robust data that Nebraska receives from the renewal surveys was instrumental in Nebraska being awarded the nursing resiliency HRSA grant. Some of the findings in the Biennial Report include:

- 83.6% of the nursing workforce in Nebraska consists of RNs. 16.4% are LPNs.
- In 2021, nine Nebraska counties have no RNs working in them. 12 counties have no LPNs.
- RNs are overrepresented in urban areas, while LPNs are overrepresented in rural areas.
- The average number of RNs per capita decreased between 2018 and 2021.
- Although there has been a surge in younger nurses joining the workforce in recent years, the average age of Nebraska RNs is still around 43. This average age has not changed significantly in recent years.
- From 2018 to 2021, there was a 6% increase in the number of Millennials in the Nebraska nursing workforce. There was a 3% decrease in the number of Generation Xers, and a 6% decrease in Baby Boomers.
- Minority representation among Nebraska RNs has increased from 3.1% in 2000 to 8% in 2020. Among LPNs, minority representation has increased from 4.6% in 2003 to 13.1% in 2021.
- Males represent 6.5% of the RN workforce in Nebraska, while nationally the percentage is 9.4%. Males represent 3.1% of the LPN workforce in Nebraska in 2021, which represents a slight decrease from 2019. Nationally, males are 8.1% of the LPN workforce.
- 47.7% of RNs in Nebraska work in hospitals. Nationally, this figure is 54.8%
- 41% of LPNs in Nebraska work in nursing homes, extended care, or assisted living facilities.
- Between 2018 and 2021, there was a 34% increase in the number of Nebraska nurses working as travelers.
- Travelling nurses earn on average \$18,000 more per year than staff nurses.
- 7% of the Nebraska nursing workforce reported that they were "very likely" to leave employment in the next 12 months. Of those, 43% were between the ages for 24 to 35. In the 2018 RN workforce survey, only 0.7% of nurses indicated they were "very likely" to leave employment.
- A large majority of nurses still indicated they were satisfied with the nursing profession. 97% indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied."

11:15 a.m. Meeting went into recess. Burbach and Harrison left the meeting.

11:30 a.m. Meeting reconvened.

Social Media Reports

Ramirez reported that two major jumps in traffic to the Center for Nursing website came in 2020. The first came in April 2020 when COVID-19 resources were added to the site, and the second jump came in November 2020 when job resources were added. In 2020, 28.3% of all visitors to the website viewed the COVID-19 Resources page. In 2021, only 13.2% of visitors viewed this page, but it remained the most viewed page after the home page. The second most popular page in 2021 was the Education Resources page, which was viewed by 12.2% of all visitors.

Glesmann reported that Facebook posts about the Center for Nursing's specialty license plates still generate quite a bit of interest. A post in November about appreciation of nurses has been the most popular post so far on the Center's Facebook page. Glesmann also reported that she has created an Instagram account for the Center, but that the account does not currently have any followers. Glesmann has contacted the graphic artist who designed the Center's specialty license plates about the possibility of designing graphics for the Instagram account.

Glesmann said that one piece of advice she came across for managing social media accounts is to have a specific theme for each day of the week, such as Wellness Wednesday. She is also considering redoing the "Know Your Board Members" posts, noting that these posts can increase the number of viewers if the Board member who is being highlighted is tagged in the post. Weber suggested that links to scholarship information for nurses might be a popular addition to the Center's social media accounts.

Foundation Report

Bostwick reported that the Foundation only needs 16 more applications for the Center's specialty license plate before the plates can go into production. Bostwick said that Kari Wade with the Nebraska Nurses Association has been helpful with distributing information about the license plates.

Bostwick reported that a new article will soon be out with more in-depth findings from the Foundation's study on the educational needs of rural nurses. Bostwick said that the study is getting to the point where they would like to get funding and administrative support in order to make the project sustainable.

Environmental Scan

Deyke reported that her facility is planning to open a remdesivir clinic, but that there is still a shortage of other monoclonal antibodies. The facility is still being stressed by staff leaving their positions to take travel assignments.

Ebert reported that 12-15% of the employees at her facility have not been able to come to work recently due to COVID-19. The slow turn-around time for test results and the recent closure of a testing site due to cold temperatures has had a big impact on staff. Staff are using vacation time while waiting for test results.

Nelson reported that she had to quarantine over the holidays due to a COVID-19 exposure, and that her ability to return to work was delayed by slow test results. She also reported that dealing with people who discredit the safety and effectiveness of vaccinations has been stressful.

Ehly reported that her facility is at capacity almost every day with COVID-19 patients. The patients tend to be younger and have shorter stays compared to COVID-19 patients at the start of the pandemic. Staff are being randomly tested for COVID-19, and about half of the results come back

positive, which means that those staff members have to be sent home. Most of the staff testing positive are vaccinated.

Walters expressed concerns that the immunity from vaccinations is waning. She noted that her school is requiring people on campus to wear KN95 masks and is restricting access to buildings.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherri Joyner".

Sherri Joyner
Health Licensing Coordinator