

Tips and Tools: Leadership

“Strong leadership is required to realize the vision of a transformed health care system.”

—2010 IOM Future of Nursing Report

Campaign for Action Goal

Increase the number of nurses on hospital/health system, policy, and organization boards.

Why?

Nurse leaders can provide a valuable perspective that balances the business needs of health care with clinical and patient outcomes. Their role in decision-making can also have a direct impact on the quality and safety of care.

Action Coalition Action

To help you achieve your leadership goal, we have pulled together some of the best examples of what Action Coalitions are doing along with resources and talking points to shape and further your efforts. While most of these materials are available on the Campaign for Action website, we have put these together for you all in one place.

1. What's Your Plan?

Your Action Coalition has set a goal to increase the number of nurses serving on institutional, organization, and policy boards. As you plan, questions to consider include:

- What are the specific leadership needs in my state?
- What are the major barriers to nurse leadership, and how can our work help to overcome these obstacles?
- Which organizations may be most helpful? Whom should I reach out to?
- What tools or materials are readily available to use?

A look at what other Action Coalitions are doing may help you to develop your plan and/or further your work. To increase the number of nurses serving on boards, some Action Coalitions are working to:

- Identify boards that are looking for nurses to serve.
- Identify boards that would benefit by including a nurse.
- Identify nurses prepared to serve on leadership boards.
- Prepare more nurses to serve on boards.
- Convince hospitals and other entities to add nurses to their boards.

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“No one person can make a society healthy. It is important to give of one’s self to make change not only on behalf of individual patients, but for large groups of patients through policy and leadership.”

—Linda Burnes Bolton, DrPH, RN, FAAN

2. Review Leadership Case Studies and Resources.

New Jersey, Texas, and Virginia have made significant headway on nurse leadership and offer ideas, materials, and case studies that may be helpful to you. Texas’ Alexia Greene, RN, PhD, FAAN, was appointed by the governor to the Board of Directors of the Texas Institute of Health Care Quality and Efficiency. And as of December 2012, New Jersey placed three nurses on public boards and has six more in the pipeline. You can too!

Check out these examples of how they are doing it:

- **Leadership Objectives:** Virginia created an action plan on nurse leadership that outlines how they plan to use available Center to Champion Nursing in America’s (CCNA) resources as well as how they plan to accomplish their goals. Other Action Coalitions may find this document helpful to assist with their own planning. View it here: http://campaignforaction.org/sites/default/files/2013_Nurse_Leaders_VA.pdf.
- **Resume Database:** New Jersey reached out to public and private organizations to assess which ones were interested in appointing nurses. They also built a database with more than 100 nurses from practice, academia, and research who are interested in serving. Learn more here: <http://campaignforaction.org/resource/preparing-nurses-board-leadership-new-jersey>.
- **Board Service Training:** Texas has partnered with their state Healthcare Trustee to train 400 nurses for board service. These trainings are typically provided after a person is appointed, but the Action Coalition hopes this effort will encourage more nurses to serve and more organizations to appoint nurses. Read the press release about this effort here: <http://www.tht.org/tht-announces-nurses-on-board.asp>.

What is your Action Coalition doing to promote nurse leadership? Share your work and progress in the community section of www.campaignforaction.org/community.

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“The nursing profession must produce leaders...from the bedside to the boardroom.”

—2010 IOM Future of Nursing Report

3. Make the Case for Nurse Leadership.

Promoting the importance of nurse leadership requires us to reach two different audiences: nurses and organizational leadership. The following resources may help:

- **Leadership Summary of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report:** Diana Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN, has compiled the best excerpts on leadership from the IOM Future of Nursing report. If you don't have time to read the full report—again—check out her brief post here: <http://campaignforaction.org/resource/need-nursing-leadership>.
- **2011 Gallup Survey:** To convince nurses about the importance of leadership roles, consider incorporating the findings of the “Nursing Leadership From Bedside to Boardroom—Opinion Leaders’ Perceptions” into your materials. Among the top barriers to nurses’ influence were that nurses are not viewed as “important decision- makers.” We can change that. View the full report here: <http://campaignforaction.org/opinion-leaders-nurses-influence>.
- **CCNA Nurse Leaders in the Boardroom DVD and Presentation:** CCNA produced a video and PowerPoint presentation on nurse leadership. Share the video with various nursing and health care organizations, as well as nurse educators and nursing education programs, and customize the PowerPoint for your Action Coalition. Learn more about the DVD (and how to order) here: <http://campaignforaction.org/resource/nurse-leaders-boardroom-resource-nurses>. PowerPoint and webinar here: <http://campaignforaction.org/webinar/nurse-leaders-boardroom-skills-you-need-be-successful-board>.
- **Research on Nurses on Boards:** Diana Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN, conducted a study that examines the leadership of hospitals and health care organizations. Read more here: <http://campaignforaction.org/community-post/new-study-nurses-representation-governing-boards>.
- **Interviews with Board Members:** There are videos of interviews with various stakeholders about board leadership available on the *Campaign for Action* website. One that may be particularly helpful is an interview with the chief nursing officer of a medical center that values nurses on its board. It was produced by the Virginia Action Coalition, and you can view it here: <http://campaignforaction.org/video/importance-nurses-hospital-boards>.
- **Talking points on leadership**, written to reach two different audiences, are enclosed and available in the communications resources section of the *Campaign for Action* website: <http://campaignforaction.org/campaign-progress/directory-resources/communications>.

Top 5 Tips to Leadership*

1. Create a Personal Leadership Plan.

Think about what you want to achieve and develop specific action steps to realize your goals. Find out what boards look for in prospective members. What can you contribute? Develop an area of expertise. Write about it. Speak about it. This is how prospective board members get noticed.

2. Speak Up. Don't wait to get noticed. Seek out opportunities to join committees, expert panels, or boards of organizations with a mission that you are passionate about. You should volunteer your service and let people know what expertise you bring to the table.

3. Start Locally. The best way to grow leadership and board skills is to start in your community and look for opportunities to serve. Think first about a local nonprofit or community organization; join and volunteer to serve on a committee or project. Committee work is the first rung on the leadership ladder.

4. Build Connections. Make connections outside your profession and within your local community. Find a mentor and ask him or her for concrete advice. And offer to mentor others.

5. Seek Ongoing Education. Invest in yourself through continuing education on leadership and board skills. Sigma Theta Tau offers an online education program for nurses, and most business schools offer board training programs.

“Board service can be rewarding to nurses both personally and professionally. It not only requires them to exercise leadership; it expands those skills and advances their capabilities and knowledge. It gives nurses the chance to meet people and enhance their professional networks. And it can be inspirational and empowering.”

—Sue Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN

*adapted from “Taking the first steps to serving on a board,” an article authored by Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, published in *American Nurse Today* (November 2012, Vol. 7 No. 11).