

# NURSING

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## Merge into Action

*By Olivia DeGiulio*

On the first day of class we were told, “all policy is health policy” (Prengaman, 2017). My classmates either raised an eyebrow or raised a hand in response to this statement. This discussion was a catalyst that sparked motivation to understand the drastic impact that nurses have on people through policy.

As we become nurses, the important trait of responsibility is continuing to develop. Nurses must take initiative to help shape policies to build and establish a healthier future as they gain more responsibility as a new nurse. There are many ways student nurses can connect policy to healthcare through getting involved with the Student Nurses’ Association (SNA) or on a community level by attending city council meetings. Nurses are trusted and bring credibility to discussions in a variety of health sectors. As nurses we care about the outcome of actions we can impact an outcome through policy involvement.

Attending a city council meeting may spark a new passion on a



unfamiliar topic. I attended the Meridian City Council meeting on October 3, 2017 where I witnessed professionalism utilized to create a welcoming environment. Interventions for fire safety were brought to life from paper to becoming an event. There were plans made to take action on concerns from individuals in the community. This may be a platform in which nurses can utilize to bring about change on a local level to improve the quality of policies that are regulated. We learn

something new everyday it is important to utilize our knowledge to enhance policies.

Nurses make up a large part of the health care profession, yet they are inconspicuous (Sullivan, pg. 47 para. 5). There is a dire need for nurses to establish and participate in shaping policy development, ensuring our voice is heard. As students we will walk into our first career bringing with us a new perspective. It is important to be creative in this field in order to solve issues that have not yet been resolved. Innovation and determination today can improve outcomes for future generations. SNA provides an early experience that can help to establish methods for problem solving and ignite individuals to be involved. We hold with us tools to bring about change, and drastic abilities to pursue our passion.

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## Utilizing Influence and Power to Create Policy Change

*By Sarah Humbach*

As the healthcare field continues to expand, so does the need for Nurses to get involved in community health programs in order to facilitate change in policy and politics. A recent Boise School Board Meeting spoke about the need for connections regarding health and wellness programs within the community. Nurses can utilize their influence and power to create policy change within community health programs.

During the school board meeting, the topic of the need to utilize and include healthcare workers in both school related health programs and community school activates was addressed. Nurses can use their influence as health professionals to





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become integrated and involved in community programs as a catalyst to get their voices heard and ultimately create change. As stated by Mason et al., (2012), “membership in an organization that promotes interdisciplinary and inter organizational collaboration offers special opportunities to shape policy” (p. 600). Becoming involved in community health programs or other professional organizations offers valuable contacts and opportunities for Nurses to develop and hone their influence-making skills (Sullivan, 2013).

According to Sullivan (2013), power is defined as the potential ability to influence, enabling a person with the ability to make choices, create order, bring about change and be effective in both work and life. As Nurses become integrated community partners in organizations such as community schools and health fairs, they can use their power of voice to spread the word about important policy related issues within the healthcare profession. Utilizing the power of voice in the correct setting can often reach enough people to set the wheel of change into motion.

As Nurses continue to partner with community programs, there will be an ample amount of opportunities to advocate for policy and political change. The more the public is exposed to a Nurses influence and power by speaking and learning about health policy, the greater the opportunity for impact and change.

## Public Health Advocacy: A Nurse's Influence

*By Morgan Hayes*



The health of the population as a whole is covered under the umbrella term of public health. Because public health impacts each and every person, it should be a topic of interest to individuals, such as nurses, who have dedicated their lives to the safety and wellbeing of others. At the Boise City Council meeting on October 10, many of the issues being discussed revolved around the topic of public health.

A large majority of the content discussed at

the city council meeting pertained to construction projects around the Treasure Valley ranging from road construction to approval for new subdivisions. The steady increase in the number of housing developments in the area is an indicator of the growing population. In relation to public health, a growing population requires a nurse to be well informed about the impact it will have on the people in the community so they know how to best advocate in the political arena and recognize the needs of the community. In addition, there will be a need for an increase in the number of healthcare providers, nurses, therapists, dentists, clinics, and hospitals in order to serve the growing community.

There are community resources and policies that are important to keep the people living in the area safe. In regard to the physical environment, “safe water and clean air, healthy workplaces, safe houses, communities and roads all contribute to good health” (World Health Organization, 2017). Public health policies are responsible for seatbelts laws, crosswalks, restaurant cleanliness, and job safety, just to name a few.

A nurse can be an influence on the political front by being involved in shaping public health policies and laws. To advocate effectively, a nurse must have sharp communication skills and be well educated on the needs of society. Whether it is patient teaching or speaking at a city council meeting, the nurse’s delivery, message and credibility are key to being influential. Advocating for the health and safety of individuals in society is at the center of what it means to be a nurse, so involvement in public health should be a priority of nurses everywhere (Sullivan, 2013).

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## Policy & Communication in Nursing

*By Sara Castillo*

As a nurse it is a part of our profession to understand policies and to be able to communicate changes. During the St. Luke’s OBGYN center’s RN and MA’s staff meeting the main focus was to review policies and discuss changes that were going to occur. Conflicts occur every day but as nurses we are trained to listen, advocate, and to resolve conflicts (Waetzig & Abell, 2016). Advocating for a patient can cause a conflict but if the nurse knows the policy and can communicate correctly the issue can be resolved.

In the workplace, policies will guide nurses on numerous actions that occur no matter if it is in a hospital or in a home (O’Grady, Mason, Outlaw, Gardner, 2016). It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for a nurse to understand the policies they need to implement. Policies occur because of numerous reasons such as safety. It is crucial that we identify the



correct patient, time, medication, dose, route and document to avoid errors.

As soon to be nurse's we need to know how to communicate effectively because communication will be a large part of what we do. When addressing an audience there is nothing worse than speaking without direction (Henbest, Evans, Hudspeth, 2016). Nurses communicate constantly to families, patients, and other medical staff so we need to do so with a clear direction. Just stating a problem won't bring change but by bringing the problem to whom has the power to make the change (Priest, 2016). Having meetings specific to individual groups are needed to discuss policies that pertain to those individuals.

In this class, I have learned how nurses need to communicate, be involved, create change and have a voice. Policies, communication, conflict, and collaboration will always be a part of our soon to be career as a registered nurse. There will always be a need to communicate and advocate for new and old policies. So, stay informed, get involved and don't back down to conflict because it will be a daily engagement as a professional nurse.



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## Political Initiatives within Corizon

*By Justin Armstrong*

Political changes are regularly occurring and very important within the working environment of Corizon. Located within many different prisons throughout the nation Corizon employees are required to not only deal with medical staff and their patients, but also a security element as well. Corizon holds regular company meetings within their institutions that allows them to disseminate information, as well as issue policy changes.



Many different medical staff members are under the impression that their voices do not make a difference, so they choose to not share different policies that they believe need to be changed. "Nurses can influence the introduction of bills as constituents and as members of professional associations that lobby Congress" (Mason, Gardner, Outlaw, and O'Grady, 2016 p. 378). Just as we have spoken about in our class, staff need to continue educating themselves as a means to ensure they are up-to-date on all

the latest pertinent information related to their jobs. If staff at Corizon continues assuming they cannot make a difference, they need to educate themselves and realize that it is their responsibility to be a voice, and help implement new policies that will better patient care and create a better work environment.

At no time during this meeting with Corizon did anyone ever say that implementing and adjusting policies was an easy process. Even in areas of national government, change is always happening. “Since winning the election, President-elect Trump has said he likes some aspects of the ACA, including not allowing insurers to discriminate based on pre-existing conditions and allowing children to stay on parents’ coverage as dependents to the age of 26” (Stone, 2017 p. 1). Even among the most powerful entities in the world, policy change is something that continues to be necessary.

Being willing to be a part of political change within the medical field is a necessary piece of being a nurse. Although it will continue to be a challenge, ensuring that we as nurses do not get complacent with aiding in policy initiatives and changes, will allow us to be the best nurses possible.

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## Healthcare Policies: Why Nurses Need to Get Involved

*By Christine Larsen*

Policy crafted without input from those it impacts is rarely efficient or effective. For example, on October 3, 2017, the Meridian City Council heard testimony from a rental property owner regarding government policies about sewer fees for unoccupied rentals. He used his knowledge and expertise to elucidate problems and offer constructive suggestions for change. Council members expressed their gratitude as he explained the nuances of owning rental properties.

Similarly, government officials want and need input from healthcare workers when making healthcare policies and decisions. If nurses want to see positive changes in healthcare policies, we must speak up! Admittedly, being “political” can be intimidating, but don’t worry – the following tips will help as you get involved.

First, attend a few government meetings to familiarize yourself with the format and learn how citizens engage in the political process. The formality and quick pace of many government meetings can intimidate even the most confident nurse (Farkas, 2013). Repeated exposure to governmental proceedings can ease your fears, so try



attending your local city council meeting or pay a visit to the Statehouse to watch a legislative session. Being familiar with the procedure will put you more at ease.

Second, practice what you want to say before you say it. Get comfortable being thorough while also being concise. If you use too many words or take up too much time trying to make your point, you will lose the attention, support, and possibly respect of your audience (Sullivan, 2013). Write out your thoughts if you have a hard time staying focused during public speaking. And remember – government officials are not healthcare workers. Have someone *outside* the healthcare field read through your remarks and give you feedback about things you might need to explain or reword. This will help you clarify your ideas and anticipate questions.

Finally, remember that *you* have expertise and experience that matters. Politicians need to hear from nurses to understand our values and views. If you don't speak up for better policies and procedures, your patients and your practice might be subjected to unfair or unreasonable expectations enforced by people who simply don't understand nursing. Help politicians see things from a nursing perspective. You can make a difference!



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