



Planning a National Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance' Envisioning NQSA

Background

Under this project, the nursing community, represented by nursing leaders from selected professional organizations, will participate in a democratic, consensual process. The purpose of this process is to determine the interest in, and need and enthusiasm for a devoted, unifying “policy voice” for nursing that influences current patient safety and quality directions in the United States.

To achieve this purpose by August 2009, a “facilitated” conversation will occur over the year that will result in a sequenced brainstorming process. The process will be based on an inventory of current activities and identification of gaps that represent clear opportunities for nurses to impact the health care quality and safety debate.

- What are the pros and cons of establishing a dedicated nursing ‘policy voice’?
- What and who is likely to support this endeavor?
- Who are the vested parties? What role might they play?
- What role does the center/alliance serve?
- What formal or informal governance structure exists to support the center/alliance’s mission, vision, and values?
- What resources and/or operational considerations exist?

This project seeks to resolve these questions. In envisioning the role and function of a devoted “office” (virtual and/or actual) on nursing quality issues of national import, it is helpful to contemplate the possibilities. This document identifies early priorities that may – or may not – be considered vital for adoption. As discussion of these points is intended to be undertaken by the convener organizations under this project, this document is merely an early vision for what is possible and should be taken in that context. Investments in inventorying opportunities and threats and for contemplating these and other strategies will be the primary outcome of the project.

Contemplating Strategic Functions and Priorities

To accomplish these objectives, NQSA must build a portfolio of activities, resources, and initiatives that engage nurses, produce reliable and credible information for the public and health care stakeholders, and affect policy directions. For this purpose, the following describes NQSA’s proposed aims:

1. NQSA will be a national, neutral convener of the nursing profession and extended nursing community (e.g., nursing educators) by providing a democratic home for discussions, deliberations, and decision making that relate to nursing quality, performance measurement, public reporting, and value-based purchasing. The primary

purpose of these activities will be to improve patient care, inspire confidence in nursing among the public, and continue to build the business case for nursing.¹

2. NQSA will be a devoted “office” to nursing quality issues of national import. NQSA’s staff will serve as a devoted resource on issues that are, understandably, diluted for each of the national nursing organizations by the diversity of issues to which they must attend. For example, while the national nursing organizations must focus on and devote resources to the nursing shortage, labor and compensation concerns, and medico-legal issues, NQSA will be exclusively focused on safety and quality issues.
3. NQSA will provide a united voice for nursing in federal and regional policy making efforts related to quality, accountability, and value-based purchasing. While nurses will continue to “infiltrate” the existing alliances (e.g., HQA, AQA, QASC), NQSA will represent a unique, dedicated nursing voice to policy making in these targeted areas. NQSA activities are viewed as supportive to and an embellishment of advocacy efforts made by the individual professional groups; however, through NQSA’s work, strong, singular messages, from among the leading nursing organizations, will be crafted, articulated, and disseminated.
4. NQSA will serve as a clearinghouse for nursing quality issues. Within this context, it will be a devoted resource for people to obtain information about nurses’ influence and contribution to safety and quality. As a “single stop shop,” consumers, purchasers, researchers, educators, and providers will be able to identify and obtain various information (e.g., publications, experts, policy briefs, consumer-oriented material, evidence, data/statistics, publications, etc.) on nursing-related safety, quality, performance measurement, public reporting, and value-based purchasing issues.
5. NQSA, in collaboration with key stakeholders (e.g., National Quality Forum, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], Leapfrog Group, National Committee for Quality Assurance [NCQA], The Joint Commission, American Medical Association, etc.), will accelerate the rate of nursing-sensitive performance measurement, public reporting and value-based purchasing.
6. Based on current performance levels and the availability of evidence-based practice, and in cooperation with government and non-government groups participating in priority setting (e.g., NQF), NQSA will establish performance goals for nursing performance, quality, and safety.
7. To the extent that it is strategically desirable and operationally feasible, NQSA will serve as a repository for and disseminator of data and information about nursing performance, quality, and safety that helps improve patient care, inspire confidence in nursing among the public, and continue to build the business case for nursing. NQSA may, in the absence of other public and/or private efforts to do so, publicly report the quality of nursing care in the US.

¹ Defined as “a clear, unambiguous case that supports the primacy of nursing’s contribution to improving care” by the National Quality Forum. National Quality Forum (NQF). *Tracking NQF-Endorsed Consensus Standards for Nursing-Sensitive Care: A 15-Month Study*. Washington, DC: NQF; 2007.

8. NQSA will advance nursing-focused quality improvement and performance excellence initiatives. While organizations like the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) have accelerated the pace of improvement innovation, these organizations lack a focus on nurses as a lever in achieving substantial improvements in quality and safety. NQSA will devote itself to engaging nurses, in number and in force, to quality improvement activities.
9. NQSA will undertake “campaigns” on important nursing quality and safety issues. These campaigns would be focused efforts to engage nursing leaders across the country in areas of concern. Virtual “communities of practice” will be created to assess relevant issues, develop relevant policy directions, and support translation of science into practice. Examples from the current environment include reducing rehospitalization and implementation of the “never events.”
10. NQSA will use a collaborative approach to identify, screen, and nominate suitable nursing leaders for key quality and safety positions on committees, technical panels, boards, and conference programs. While this scope of work will not prohibit each nursing organization from nominating their own, independent candidate(s), it will result in consensus among all the key nursing organizations on the best nominees. The chances of appointment will be improved through the identification and nomination of a single candidate that has garnered the support of all key nursing organizations.
11. In order to build capacity in the near-term and sustain capacity in the long-term, NQSA will engage the best nursing quality and safety leaders in the country and foster new talent among young leaders. To this end, NQSA will support a nursing quality and safety leadership succession plan so that talent stands “ready,” future organizational leaders are developed, and a learning climate is fostered.
12. Recognizing that the conceptual framework that underpins NQSA as well as its key priorities are based on a solid, evidentiary base, NQSA will work to identify gaps in research and foster opportunities for investigators to pursue research that will further NQSA’s goals of health care quality and safety for all Americans.

Imagining NQSA’s Impact

While a strategic planning and prioritization efforts must be undertaken, under the direction of NQSA’s leadership, early achievements might include:

- Ensuring that public reports of health care quality (e.g., The Joint Commission’s Quality Check, NCQA’s Health Plan Report Card, Leapfrog Group’s Hospital Quality and Safety Survey, AHRQ’s Patient Safety Culture Surveys and Health Care Quality and Disparities Reports, Hospital Compare) include one or more measures that quantify nurses’ contribution to safety and patient outcomes;
- Integrating nursing measures into existing hospital measurement, public reporting, and value-based purchasing activities (e.g., HQA, Consumer’s CHECKBOOK);
- Translating and disseminating important national policies that utilize nurses as levers in quality and safety into practice and action. Examples include campaigns on reducing readmission and implementing “never events”;

- Collaborating with the government, payer, employer, and business communities to integrate and align nursing priorities into employer quality and value-based purchasing activities (e.g., Bridges to Excellence, Leapfrog Group's Hospital Insights);
- Creating new vehicles to publicly report nursing performance;
- Establishing goals for high performing nursing across settings and episodes of care;
- Designing, testing, and implementing financial incentive programs that reward high performing nursing care;
- Serving as a clearinghouse for research and other evidence that demonstrate nursing's contribution to patient safety, health care outcomes, and a professional work environment; and
- Promptly responding to federal legislation and regulation that impacts nursing care and nursing-related quality and safety including, but not limited to, the annual Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) rule.

Next Steps

These priorities and theoretical achievements must be viewed as possibilities and merely serve to inspire creativity in determining the role, function, and need of an organizing NQSA structure. Over the course of this project, representatives of the convener organizations will contemplate the opportunities, threats, strengths, and weakness of pursuing this vision.