



‘Planning a National Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance’ Project Scope

Overview

In September 2008, with the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), The George Washington University (GW), Department of Nursing Education (DNE) launched a 12-month project that seeks to explore the interest in and feasibility of establishing a devoted, unifying “policy voice” for nursing that influences current patient safety and quality directions in the United States.

This project is an exploratory effort to facilitate a dialogue among leaders of selected professional nursing organizations in envisioning a national Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance (NQSA). Through application of a democratic process, the role, value, and priorities, along with an optimal structure and a sustainability model for translating NSQA from concept into reality will be explored.

The project seeks to:

- Identify current policy directions that will be most meaningfully impacted by a unified nursing “voice”;
- Determine opportunities for nursing to contribute to the public policy dialogue;
- Enhance nursing leadership’s influence on emerging transparency and accountability agendas;
- Assess the current interest in, appetite for, and sustainability of a national Nursing Quality and Safety Alliance including possible functions, roles, priorities, and organizing structures; and
- Determine, with insight, support, and consensus from key nursing convener organizations, the feasibility of launching NQSA.

With the assistance and participation of nine nursing convener organizations and the informal involvement of the larger nursing community, facilitated discussions applying democratic principles will reveal the interest in and support for a strengthened voice by nurses in policy setting that influences health care quality and safety.

Scope: What’s “in” and What’s “out”?

The project’s scope is relatively narrow and does not seek, for example, to reinvent national, regional, and/or local quality improvement initiatives. Instead, this project is designed to explore the need for and interest in activities that would add value—going above and/or beyond—existing efforts in these and related areas. For example, the project is not intended to engage convener organizations in building an organization that funds research to better understand nursing’s contribution to the quality of patient care as that ‘function’ is currently

housed within the Interdisciplinary Nursing Quality Research Initiative (INQRI); however, the project is intended to explore opportunities to apply such research within the policy context.

Because the project's scope has been deliberately crafted to explore unique issues without 'reinventing the wheel,' it is important to articulate what is within scope and what lies clearly outside the boundaries of this effort.

This planning project *will*:

- Assess the 'current state' of activities and policy directions that address quality measurement, reporting of performance data, and incentives to improve quality and safety delivered by nurses;
- Inventory current and future nursing efforts aimed at influencing health care quality and safety policy directions;
- Inventory existing voluntary alliances and other organizing structures that aim to influence policies related to health care quality and safety;
- Gather information and/or data to determine support for potential directions and/or proposed next steps;
- Determine the effectiveness of current nursing advocacy efforts in health care quality and safety;
- Identify gaps and 'pressure points' that inspire confidence in nursing among the public, continue to build the business case for nursing, and accelerate nursing's ability to improve quality and safety improve patient care;
- Solicit interest in the ability of nursing to appropriately respond to the threats and opportunities identified;
- Determine the interest in a devoted "office" (virtual and/or actual) on nursing quality issues of national import;
- Identify key functions that would be supportive to and an embellishment of existing advocacy efforts and that would achieve strong, singular messages from among the leading nursing organizations for primary use in policy making; and
- Identify, to the extent possible, an organizing structure suitable for supporting these functions and sustainable for both short- and long-term effectiveness.

This planning project *will not*:

- Conduct original research;
- Serve to resolve, formulate, or articulate policies and/or positions on particular issues of import;
- Formally engage the entire nursing community in discussions, deliberations, and decision making;

- Replace ongoing discussions about issues relevant to nursing including, but not limited to, scope of practice, education and credentialing, staffing levels, workforce shortages, or the work environment;
- Reconsider historical decisions and/or reassess previous consensual decisions affecting nursing;
- For the purpose of appointments, identify and/or propose candidates or nominees to key committees, advisory groups, or boards;
- Replace existing activities and/or staff functions related to policy and/or standards development that relate to the health care quality and patient safety agenda;
- Establish or launch campaigns or communications plans to advance the position of nurses and/or nursing.

Next Steps

Following the inaugural conference call of the convener organizations, project staff will begin to assess and document the existing landscape, opportunities and threats, the existence of “like” organizations that may be collaborative or competitive, and possible opportunities to strengthen nursing’s policy voice for discussion and deliberation by the nursing conveners. A sequential, stepwise meeting schedule with affiliated purpose(s) has been established to focus deliberations and ensure rapid progress.