



Position Statement

930 E. Woodfield Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173 | 800.900.9659 | ena.org

Nurse Leaders in Emergency Care Settings

Description

In the ever-changing environment of emergency nursing, effective leadership from day-to-day shift management by a charge nurse (or equivalent) up to and including the chief nursing officer (or equivalent) is essential. Today, emergency nurse leaders around the world are challenged with nurse shortages, regulations, and reforms as well as the threat of emerging infectious diseases that can change the landscape at a moment's notice. Regardless of the emergency care setting, nursing leadership is vital in promoting safe practice and the effective and efficient delivery of high-quality care (Asiri et al., 2016; Khomami & Rustomfram, 2019).

Successful nurse leaders use a variety of management and leadership styles to manage what are often competing responsibilities to ensure optimal patient outcomes while promoting nurses' job satisfaction and collaborating with medical providers. In addition to using various leadership styles, both seasoned and emerging leaders make evidenced-based decisions and incorporate information from many sources, including internal organizational data and national benchmarking data (Sevy-Majers & Warshawsky, 2020).

Emergency nurse leaders uphold standards of professional nursing practice that support a healthy work environment conducive to retention of nurses. They do this by mitigating workplace violence; fostering a just culture regarding errors; creating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and by supporting the development of emerging leaders (Bayer et al., 2018; Mayer et al., 2022; Nurmeksela et al., 2022; Owens et al., 2022). Emergency nurse leaders collaborate with key stakeholders within and outside the emergency care setting to establish and maintain dynamic relationships. These relationships are pivotal to managing issues such as quality, safety, and satisfaction.

All professional nurses are encouraged to pursue career development and continuing education. This is especially true of emergency nurse leaders. Nurse leaders should further their education beyond the entry level baccalaureate degree as advocated by the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), American Nurses Association (ANA), American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL), and the International Council of Nurses (ICN). Nurse leaders at every level should model positive behaviors with regard to career development and continuing education (ANA, 2021; American Organization of Nurse Executives [AONE] & AONL, 2015b; Bayer et al., 2018; Bergstedt & Wei, 2020; ICN, 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021). ENA, ANA, and AONL also recommend that nurse leaders attain and maintain certification in their area of specialty as well as membership and participation in professional organizations to further demonstrate commitment to the professional practice of nursing (ANA, 2021; AONE & AONL, 2015a; Bayer et al., 2018). Continuing education for nurse leaders at all levels includes gaining an understanding of leadership competencies and behaviors necessary to be successful (Bayer et al., 2018; National Health Service Leadership Academy, n.d.).

ENA Position

It is the position of the Emergency Nurses Association that

1. Emergency nurse leaders use evidence-based decision-making to uphold a commitment to high-quality, safe, and effective care.
2. Emergency nurse leaders support lifelong learning for themselves and others.
3. Emergency nurse leaders serve as role models for professionalism by joining and participating in their specialty nursing associations.
4. Emergency nurse leaders retain their own certification in emergency nursing practice and support the certification of others in emergency nursing practice.
5. Emergency nurse leaders promote an environment that is conducive to professional nursing practice, including, but not limited to, building relationships and mentoring.
6. Emergency nurse leaders maintain clinical competencies to assist staff when necessary.
7. Emergency nurse leaders support innovation, learning, and the use of various leadership styles to proactively manage the complexities of the emergency care setting.

Background

An emergency nurse director (or equivalent) is responsible for incorporating strategic organizational goals and objectives into the department's daily operations while overseeing the nursing care delivered by others, maintaining 24-hour accountability for all patient care and the quality of that care (Nurmeksela et al., 2022; Owens et al., 2022; Turner et al., 2022). To facilitate this, the emergency care setting director needs a strong foundation in all aspects of clinical emergency care as well as a robust understanding of administrative duties to manage the complex and ever-changing environment.

Emergency nurse directors and other nurse leaders need to understand leadership competencies and demonstrate the skills and behaviors of those competencies (Bayer et al., 2018; National Health Service Leadership Academy, n.d.). For example, to lead advances in healthcare and meet the ever-changing dynamics of today's healthcare system, emergency nurse leaders need to apply diverse leadership skills to best meet the needs of a situation (Bayer et al., 2018). Transformational and authentic leadership are two of several leadership styles shown to have a significant positive impact on today's healthcare environments (Bergstedt & Wei, 2020; Speechia et al., 2021). Both leadership styles have been linked to improved employee effectiveness, decreased nurse turnover, healthy work environments, and high levels of patient satisfaction (Bergstedt & Wei, 2020; Speechia et al., 2021).

Emergency nurse leaders also need to develop themselves through life-long learning, personal growth, and practicing the skills they have learned to move from novice to expert (Benner, 2001). Strong nurse leadership is positively associated with patient outcomes, performance, patient nursing satisfaction, and staff retention as well as having a positive influence on the direction of the nursing profession (Asiri et al., 2016; Mlambo et al., 2021; Speechia, et al., 2021). Emergency nurse leaders not only model expert practice but also contribute to a healthy work environment through support, encouragement, advocacy, collaboration, and innovation (ANA, 2021; ENA, 2023).

Resources

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Authors and Reviewers

Authored by

Joanne E. Navaroli, MSN, RN, CEN

Reviewed and updated by

Joanne E. Navaroli, MSN, RN, CEN

2022 ENA Position Statement Committee Members

Brenda Braun, MSN, BSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, FAEN

Alison Day, PhD, MSN, BS, RN, FAEN

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Dawn Peta, BN, RN, ENC@

Cheryl Riwitis, DNP, RN, FNP, EMT-B, CEN, CFRN, FNP-BC, TCRN, FAEN

Elizabeth Stone, PhD, RN, CPEN, CHSE, FAEN

Sharon Vanairsdale, DNP, MS, RN, APRN, NP, CNS, CEN, ACNS-BC, NP-C, FAEN, FAAN

Jean Proehl, MN, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN, FAEN, FAAN, Chairperson

2022 ENA Board of Directors Liaison

Ryan Oglesby, PhD, RN, CEN

2022 ENA Staff Liaison

Domenique Johnson, MSN, RN

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