



THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN RED CROSS NURSING: A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Humanity

"...born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavors in its international and national capacity to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being."

--1st Principle of the American Red Cross

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a century, nurses have been at the forefront of the American Red Cross. In 2008, the Institute of Medicine (the “IOM”) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation collaborated to examine the nursing profession and provide guidance to transform it in an ever-changing healthcare environment. In 2010, the collaboration yielded a report: “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health” (the “IOM Report”). Recently, the National Nursing Committee of the American Red Cross (the “NNC”) likewise reviewed how nurses have been, presently are, and could be used to help advance the strategic and business objectives of the Red Cross to best serve our local communities. The NNC has studied the IOM Report and its potential impacts on nursing in the Red Cross. This paper, “The Future of American Red Cross Nursing: A Blueprint for Action,” identifies three of the eight IOM Report recommendations as being especially relevant to Red Cross nursing:

- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training (IOM Report #1);
- Prepare and enable nurses to lead change and advance health (IOM Report #7); and
- Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of . . . workforce data (IOM Report #8).

This paper aligns these recommendations with Red Cross strategic and business priorities and outlines how nurses can and should be actively engaged as full contributors in achieving such priorities.

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Health care in the United States currently has many challenges driven by the demands of an aging and more chronically ill population and a fragmented and unaffordable system. In response to these enormous challenges, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a report in October, 2010 titled [*The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*](#). In this report the IOM stated that a key to creating a more accessible, cost effective and highly functioning system was to more effectively use the skills and expertise of nurses. Of the eight bold recommendations presented in the IOM report, three have particular relevance to the American Red Cross and its corporate priorities:

- Allow nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training;
- Prepare and enable nurses to lead change and advance health; and
- Build an infrastructure for collection and analysis of workforce data.

As the American Red Cross seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering, it too is at a crossroads in building a stronger and more cost-effective organization. Nurses serve in many paid and volunteer roles from service delivery to education, yet in meeting the expectations of those we serve and those we partner with, we must use nurses even more effectively. Using nurses more effectively in the organization will, in particular, help to generate new revenue streams, strengthen product development and integrity, and strengthen an already strong Red Cross brand given that nurses remain the #1 trusted profession in our nation. A stronger, highly integrated workforce of Red Cross nurses will make for a stronger Red Cross organization.

AMERICAN RED CROSS CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND IOM RECOMMENDATIONS:

The [American Red Cross National Nursing Committee](#) believes that adopting the three IOM recommendations as a guideline for service will help nurses more closely align their work with the corporate priorities, including helping the organization achieve financial success, revitalizing the Red Cross brand, advancing blood safety, increasing donations and improving teamwork.

What follows are the IOM recommendations, ways that Red Cross nurses should implement them and how they align with the corporate priorities.

IOM RECOMMENDATION #1

NURSES SHOULD PRACTICE TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The IOM Report recommends that all nurses practice to the full extent of their education and training, while pursuing additional education. The Red Cross provides opportunities in all business lines. Taking full advantage of the skills, expertise and commitment of nurses will yield more effective service delivery overall.

DISASTER SERVICES

Nurses at all levels would benefit from at least introductory education about the nursing roles and opportunities in the Red Cross. At a minimum, all nurses, beginning in nursing school, should learn how to prepare themselves personally and professionally for disasters, in order to be more readily available and effective during disasters in their communities. [Disaster Health Service Enhanced Delivery Service guidelines](#) to allow nurses to practice to their level of education and training have been developed. This is a change from previous Red Cross practice that was regulated not by scope of practice, but by a narrow set of medical protocols (first aid) that prohibited any deviation from this document. This change to scope of practice allows nurses and other disaster health services workers to systematically assess clients and subsequently intervene using the whole range of their professional status with all clients (particularly those with functional/mobility needs or FNSS). An ongoing field evaluation will generate new insights on practice scope and opportunities for innovation.

Other key nursing organizations have taken steps to increase the disaster-preparedness levels of nursing students and nurses. For example:

- The American Association of Colleges of Nursing states disaster preparedness content is essential for all baccalaureate level nursing graduates.
- The National Council of State Boards of Nursing added disaster preparedness content to the national licensure exam.
- The National Student Nurses Association encourages all students to work with local chapters to prepare themselves for current and future service.
- George Washington University offers a free on-line course called *Nurses on the Front Line: Preparing for and Responding to Emergencies and Disasters*.

American Red Cross nurses should:

- Continue to completely implement the Disaster Health Services Enhanced Delivery Service model to attract more nurses to volunteer in Disaster Health Services; inform national headquarters and field leadership of this initiative; and inform the professional community that Red Cross nurses practice to the full scope of their licensure.
- Assist in the active implementation of the American Red Cross National Student Nursing Program for all U.S. nursing schools. This serves not only to train future nurses, but to engage them in the work of the Red Cross in general.
- Create strong partnerships with nursing organizations such as the Black Nurses Association and Sigma Theta Tau to engage current and future nurses.
- Actively promote the use of the *Red Cross Ready RN* online course, available for free on the

Red Cross intranet to all Red Cross nurse volunteers, and provide continuing education credits for those who complete this course.

OTHER BUSINESS LINES

Opportunities should be expanded to more effectively allow nurses to deliver services to the full scope of their license in other business lines. Promoting the recognized public trust of nurses in Preparedness and Health and Safety Services, Service to the Armed Forces and Biomedical Services will also enhance the Red Cross brand. Other areas of nurse expertise include leadership, health policy, system improvement, research and evidence-based practice knowledge.

Preparedness and Health and Safety Services (PHSS). American Red Cross nurses should:

- Expand nurse and student nurse roles in CPR training and health fairs to also conduct health screenings and prevention and wellness consultation, immunization clinics, as well as family and community education. Health education could include care giving, babysitting, health promotion, workforce safety and school health.
- Help develop more Nurse Assistant Training (NAT) programs to respond to aging and disabled population (including veterans) needs.
- Help develop the next generation of care giving instruction for families, health care organizations and agencies entering the care giving arena.
- Conduct general health promotion activities, including preparing communities for pandemic flu and other emerging infectious disease.
- Partner in more Preparedness and Health and Safety Services courses since nurses add value to the credibility of the health and safety content and will help to retain nurse volunteers for the organization.

Service to the Armed Forces (SAF). American Red Cross nurses should:

- Help military personnel and family members understand the health needs of deployed and returning service members.
- Lead efforts to assist homeless veterans.
- Work beside SAF mental health professionals to address physical and psychosocial aspects of military service and deployment.
- Teach courses on military bases for families such as Family Caregiving, Coping with Deployment, Psychological First Aid for Families and Babysitting.
- Promote the Nurse Assistance Training (NAT) program as a military base offering to assist a spouse or family member find employment.
- Use the [State Nurse Liaison \(SNL\) Network](#) to assist chapters in expanding services to military personnel and families.

Biomedical Services. American Red Cross nurses should:

- Actively work to increase blood donations in underserved communities, using Red Cross nurses and student nurses from like ethnic communities in recruiting.
- Replicate a pilot program from the Midwest which is testing how nurses and student nurses delivering a presentation on blood and blood products and their many uses can increase first time and repeated blood donations, while decreasing stress of people donating blood.
- Work with student nurses to sponsor blood drives.

IOM RECOMMENDATION # 7

NURSES SHOULD BE PREPARED AND ENABLED TO LEAD CHANGE AND ADVANCE HEALTH

LEADERSHIP IN THE RED CROSS: The nursing profession has a network of nearly 4 million RNs and LPNs, many of whom have heeded the call by volunteering for the Red Cross. They will continue to do so at times of crisis. No other nursing practice organization in the U.S. can claim a breadth of network connectedness, the assurance of professional workforce competence, expert collaborative organizing capability, continual engagement in service improvement and unambiguous commitment to community wellbeing as can Red Cross nurses. The IOM report recommends that nurses be included in organizational planning and leadership roles to be “part of the solution” to organizational challenges. Many Red Cross nurses have demonstrated their national, divisional and regional leadership skills. Including these nurses and members of the State Nurse Liaison Network in strategic and operational planning groups will enable them to facilitate organizational goals and successes.

NURSING LEADERSHIP IN THE RED CROSS

The American Red Cross should enable the Chief Nurse to:

- Serve as a trusted representative of top administration to help communicate policy and standards on health related issues.
- Collaborate with business lines and field leadership to provide leadership and consultation on new health initiatives.
- Present the Red Cross nursing “face” in the public realm, communicate the organizational mission and maintain goodwill with the American public.
- Receive and participate in regular communication and collaboration with heads of the business lines and field leadership.
- Convene nurses within the Red Cross, both staff and volunteer, and outside the organization, to provide a collective voice and consultation for the health goals of the organization.

The American Red Cross paid and volunteer nurse workforce should:

- Nominate talented individuals for key leadership and governance positions within the Red Cross on national, state, divisional and local levels and within all business lines. Examples include the Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), the National Red Cross Board of Governors and governance positions at the local and state levels.
- Continue to strengthen, promote and assist in organizational financial stability through National Nursing Committee development and fundraising activities in support of nursing and health initiatives
- Concentrate development and fundraising activities on planned giving and obtaining resources through foundations and grant initiatives, consistently aligning revenue with organizational mission.
- Assure that nurses take responsibility for identifying problems and then devise and implement improvement plans within all lines of business.
- Advertise opportunities and actively promote nurses for involvement both in paid and volunteer leadership positions within the Red Cross.

IOM RECOMMENDATION #8

BUILD AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF WORKFORCE DATA

DOCUMENTING RED CROSS NURSES: In the American Red Cross, nurses and others who enroll in the Disaster Services Human Resource (DSHR) System are tracked. Employed Red Cross nurses and other personnel are tracked through Human Resources. However, there is no system to accurately track and recognize all volunteers, including nurses, who assist with the various non-disaster programs of the Red Cross in their communities and at national headquarters. To assist in communicating important organizational information to nurse volunteers about health and nursing initiatives and to document specific involvement of nurses in corporate and field activities, volunteers who are nurses need to be identified as such in a national volunteer database. Tracking the involvement and accomplishments of nurses and nurse leaders within the organization will enable Red Cross leadership to recognize the value of nurses in meeting corporate priorities.

The American Red Cross should:

- Ensure that future volunteer tracking and management systems include professional licensure and certification identifiers to include nurses.
- Ensure that future nurses (i.e., student nurses) are tracked on pre-licensure activities that involve them with the Red Cross (e.g., courses through the LMS data base).
- Promote the full implementation of business planning and subsequent [metrics analysis](#) of nurses' impact on the corporate and business line goals.
- Participate in the National Workforce Data Analysis to record all nurses in the workforce.

SUMMARY

The IOM Report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, identifies challenges and opportunities for the nursing profession, generally, and for nursing in the American Red Cross, specifically. The IOM Report supports a strong nursing workforce in an effort to improve the health care system in this country. This American Red Cross National Nursing Committee document, *The Future of American Red Cross Nursing: A Blueprint for Action*, outlines ways in which the American Red Cross and its nurse leaders can address some of the challenges and seize some of the opportunities the IOM Report presents.

Using nurses to build programmatic, service delivery and leadership capacity at the chapter and national levels will increase revenue, donations and ultimate financial sustainability. Working with chapters to meet their individual goals and expectations can improve teamwork as volunteer nurses partner with chapter leaders to serve their communities' preparedness, health and safety needs, serve military personnel and their families, as well as educate the public about the critical need for blood and blood products. Finally, as the most trusted profession in the country, brand recognition is always enhanced when using nurses. By using this Blueprint, the Red Cross will: be better able to achieve its strategic and business objectives; be able to work in tandem with other national organizations in leading change in the nursing profession and in the health care arena; be faithful to the principles of the Red Cross movement; regain its status as a national leader in nursing; and modernize and revitalize the Red Cross nursing practice. In short, a strong nursing workforce within the Red Cross will yield a stronger Red Cross overall.

The National Nursing Committee respectfully urges the American Red Cross to promote this Blueprint for Action and to implement its provisions at all levels.