



Nurse-Led Advocacy *Reflections from a 4-Part Learning Collaborative Series*

In spring 2022, the National Nurse-Led Care Consortium (NNCC) conducted the **Nurse-Led Advocacy Learning Collaborative**, a virtual, four-part training series for a national nursing audience. Each 1.5hr live session would begin with a five-minute check-in, followed by a didactic presentation and a breakout activity in separate groups. Breakout groups would then reconvene and share their discussion highlights. Participants were also given time to discuss any further points or ask questions.

The series focused on:

Session 1: *The Legislative Process: From drafting a bill to lobbying for its passage*

Session 2: *Grassroots Advocacy: Informing Stakeholders and testifying for policy change*

Session 3: *Coalition and Network Building*

Session 4: *Systems Change Through Action: Developing research and fostering learning networks*

Featured Speakers:

- Lacey Eden MS, FNP-C Pediatric NP and Vaccination Advocate
- Erin Blair BSN, RN, Director of Nurse Advocacy and Resources, National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
- Debra Tony PhD, RN, FAAN, President of the National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations and co-lead for The National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing
- Ruth McDermott-Levy, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN, Professor and Co-Director at the Mid-Atlantic Center for Children’s Health and the Environment at M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing at Villanova University

Session Goals

Session 1: *The Legislative Process: From drafting a bill to lobbying for its passage*

This session established that advocacy is interwoven in nursing practice: Nurses are patient advocates, many aspects of health care are regulated through legislation, political activism advances the nursing profession, and nurses already possess skills for political activism. Participants learned the steps of how a bill becomes a law and how to apply advocacy to nursing practice by following the “Be the CHANGE” method (**C**ollect, **H**inge, **A**ssociations, **N**egotiate, **G**ather, and **E**xpertise). The session also discussed the importance of knowing the facts, brainstorming ideas with nursing students, gathering recommendations, feedback, and reviewed interested parties on the language of a bill, how to find a senator and house of representative to sponsor the bill, and gather support. To conclude the

presentation, Lacey Eden provided tips to improve the experiences of those working to promote child health advocacy, acknowledging that the process requires time and perseverance.

Session 2: *Grassroots Advocacy: Informing Stakeholders and testifying for policy change*

For this session, Erin Blair reviewed advocacy from all levels - Individual Patient Advocacy, Institutional and Organizational Advocacy, and Community Education and Engagement. Erin discussed areas of advocacy such as direct client services, community and organizational partnerships, advocacy to address community needs, and change within your organization. Participants learned about the formation of the Nurse-Family Policy Team and their task of creating a policy agenda that was client-centered, relying on Nurse-Home Visitors' experiences and expertise and informed by the client's voice through their signature event, Community Action Day. The Brunch and Learn strategy is used to turn the volume up on issues that the organization is working on.

Session 3: *Coalition and Network Building*

Dr. Toney presented on her work and leadership both as the President of The National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurses Associations and co-lead with the National Commission to End Racism in Nursing. The key areas Dr. Toney discussed to best impact change include workforce, leadership, education, well-being, and emergency preparedness/response. As highlighted in NCEMNA's vision, Dr. Toney spoke of the need to exemplify inclusivity, diversity, and equity and create an antiracist praxis and environment within nursing, as highlighted by NCEMNA, an advocacy organization and network of those working together to create systems change. Participants also learned about the Commission to End Racism in Nursing, and Dr. Toney reflected on it's mission to set as the scope and standard of practice that nurses confront and mitigate systemic racism within the nursing profession and address the impact that racism has on nurses and nursing. In sharing her work, attendees were able to discuss the importance of coalition building and public policy advocacy work in influencing nursing and nurses. Topic areas also included strategies to address racism within nursing education, practice, policy, and research, including addressing issues of leadership and the use of power.

Session 4: *Systems Change Through Action: Developing research and fostering learning networks*

Dr. McDermott-Levy presented on climate change and system change through action. Her advocacy "Big Yes", or big opportunity to prioritize that one cause, was to be a part of The Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit. This unit provides education to individuals, health professionals, and the community. Dr. McDermott-Levy emphasized action in academia through teaching and research, with the goal of incorporating environmental health into the nursing curricula. She explained that nurse researchers are advancing science. She also discussed the change in the nursing paradigm for advocacy and the stages of nursing's political development. In conclusion, she emphasized that you can lead through the maze of systems change.

Discussion: Emerging Themes and Participant Perspectives

Have you faced any barriers in the process of implementing policy change?

Collaboration across nursing organizations (involving nursing students and connecting them)
Hospital lobbyists-barrier for policy change (e.g., mandatory staffing ratios)
Union participation and organizations pushing back
Supporting nurses in identifying evidence-based practices
Training on how to advocate and maneuver through the process
Not having the time to consistently push policymakers
Having employer buy in or belonging to an organization that coordinates advocacy actions

Why is coalition building essential to nursing and nurses?

Being able to advocate for our careers
Sharing what we've learned from the pandemic
Express how we are treated, perceived, etc.
Strength in numbers, a "louder voice" = more powerful!
Different perspectives create a clearer "puzzle"
Promotes education building
Sometimes our coalitions and networking opportunities are informal and not a literal coalition
Experience is transferable
There is power in coming together and building something on common interest and clear need
Helps promote nurses' education

How can nurses advocate for change in their units and larger organizations while also coping with the intensity of racism in the workplace?

Self-advocate, send a letter to a supervisor
Call it out, let them know you are not satisfied or happy
Coalitions are the driving force of health equity
Be active in committees (DEI committee work) in their organizations to advocate and share experience to create change
Sometimes nurses don't know how to advocate, who to talk to, or how to voice their needs, work with others who have shared experiences to work together to influence systems level change
Go to HR, request they look at performance and pay increases and overall experience, and be informed of your rights
BE VOCAL

What do you need to get prepared?

Understand the health impact and the people affected by the policy area
Getting into the community; Holding events: Build or re-create trust; Involve the community and ask what they need
Educate yourself through reading, research, conversations, etc.
Understand the resources available to you through your professional networks
Find your niche, not everyone can do everything
Assess your level of risk and comfort
Acknowledge health inequities that exist in your community and what barriers exist as a result
Call your policy maker and tell them your concerns, see where you fit or if you can support in educating others
What policies are out there; Align with an advocacy group
Use professional associations; serve on committees

Highlighted Resources:

- Eden, L. M., Merrill, H., & Luthy, K. E. (2021). Empowering nurse practitioners to make health policy CHANGE: Steps to successful passage of legislation in Utah. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 33(12), 1254–1260.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/JXX.0000000000000561>
- [Environmental Health in Nursing: Free online textbook](#) (Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE))
- [Lead Free Philly Legislative Testimony by Erin Blair](#)
- [Listening Sessions on Racism in Nursing \(June 2021\)](#)
- [National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing: Survey \(January 2022\)](#)

Visit www.nurseledcare.org to browse all materials from this series.

Contact communications@ncc.us for more information on our training offerings and opportunities for partnership.