# The Future of Nursing 2020-2030
## Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity

# Highlights for Federal Policymakers & Agencies

## Why Nurses?

The United States cannot fully thrive until everyone—no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they make—can live their healthiest life possible.

Promoting health and well-being has long been an essential role of nurses. As the largest segment of the health care workforce, they are bridge builders and collaborators who engage and connect with people, communities, and organizations to ensure people from all backgrounds have what they need to be healthy and well. But the COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed the challenges nurses face every day and has added significant new hurdles.

## About the Report

An ad hoc committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine conducted a study aimed at envisioning and charting a path forward for the nursing profession to help reduce inequities in people's abilities to achieve their full health potential.

The committee developed a framework identifying the key areas for strengthening the nursing profession to meet the challenges of the decade ahead. These areas include the nursing workforce, leadership, nursing education, nurse well-being, and emergency preparedness and response, as well as responsibilities of nursing with respect to structural and individual determinants of health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed the challenges nurses face every day and has added significant new hurdles. It has also given some nurses more autonomy, shifted payment models, and sparked overdue conversations about dismantling racism. The report recommends actions policymakers can take to support and enable nurses to help chart the country's course to good health and well-being for all.

## Lift Barriers to Expand the Contributions of Nursing

The report recommends that federal agencies and lawmakers enable nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training by permanently removing barriers that prevent them from more fully addressing social needs and social determinants of health.

- By 2022, all changes to federal laws adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that expanded scope of practice, telehealth eligibility, insurance coverage, and payment parity for services provided by nurses at all levels should be made permanent.
- When possible, federal authority should be used to supersede restrictive state laws.

## Support the Nursing Workforce in Addressing Health Equity

The report recommends that by 2023, federal government agencies should start to enable the nursing workforce to address social determinants of health and health equity more comprehensively.

- Provide workforce planning support and funding for efforts to rapidly increase the number of nurses with expertise in health equity and the number of nurses in specialties with significant shortages.
- Invest in nursing education and traineeships in public health; nurses' and nursing schools' efforts to diversify the nursing workforce; nurse loan and scholarship programs to address nurse shortages; and technical assistance that focuses on nurse retention.
- Support the academic pursuits of socioeconomically disadvantaged students by encouraging partnerships among baccalaureate and higher degree nursing programs and community colleges, tribal colleges, and schools serving large populations of students of color.

The report also recommends that the Department of Health and Human Services establishes a National

Nursing Workforce Commission—or significantly invest in and enhance the Health Resources and Services Administration's National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice—to report on and propose actions to better prepare the future nursing workforce to address health equity.

## Design Better Payment Models

The report recommends that federal payers and public health agencies establish sustainable and flexible payment mechanisms to support nurses in health care and public health settings, including school nurses.

- Reform and use fee-for-service, value-based, and alternative payment models.
- Create a National Nurse Identifier to recognize and measure the value of services registered nurses provide.
- Ensure adequate funding for school and public health nursing, including by promoting new ways of financing public health to address the social determinants of health and using pay scales for public health nurses that are competitive with nursing positions in other sectors.

## Incorporate Nursing Expertise into Healthcare Systems

The report recommends that all public health care systems incorporate nursing expertise in data projects to support initiatives focused on social determinants of health and health equity that use diverse digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and other innovative technologies.

- Expand the national strategy for a broadband/5G infrastructure and increase the availability of necessary devices (e.g., smartphones) so high-risk populations can access telehealth services administered by nurses.

- With leadership from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, accelerate projects that integrate data on the social determinants of health into electronic health records and help build a nationwide infrastructure to capture and share community-held knowledge and promote collaboration.

## Protect Nurses During Public Health Emergencies and Disasters

To enable nurses to address inequities within communities, the report recommends that federal agencies strengthen and protect the nursing workforce during public health emergencies and natural disasters, including those related to climate change.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should fund a National Center for Disaster Nursing and Public Health Emergency Response, along with regional centers, to serve as a hub for providing leadership in education, training, and career development that will ensure the national nursing workforce is prepared to respond to crises.
- The agency should also create a national action plan for addressing gaps in nursing education, support, and protection during such events.

## Research the Impact of Nursing

The report recommends that federal agencies partner with private associations and foundations to convene representatives from nursing, public health, and health care to develop and support a research agenda and evidence base describing the impact of nursing interventions, including multi sector collaboration, on social determinants of health, environmental health, health equity, and nurses' health and well-being.

*For the full recommendations, access the report at: bit.ly/futureofnursing2030*

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