



**The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders  
Position Statement**

**Baccalaureate Educational Preparation for Pennsylvania Professional Registered Nurses**

The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (PONL) is the state organization for nurse leaders and the voice of nursing leadership in Pennsylvania. PONL represents nurse leaders at all levels – chief nursing officers, directors, managers and others responsible for the delivery of safe, effective patient care. PONL functions as a networking and information vehicle for Pennsylvania nursing leaders and is the state affiliate of the American Organization for Nurse Leaders (AONL).

PONL believes that a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN) should be the entry level requirement for practice as a registered nurse. We recognize that there are various levels of entry into nursing practice and encourage the development of, and financial support for, programs that enable current nurses in practice to obtain a BSN.

Should legislation be introduced in the Commonwealth requiring a BSN within a given number of years after initial licensure, we believe existing registered nurses should be exempt from these requirements. While the requirement of a BSN will not affect currently licensed nurses, we strongly support and encourage them to advance their education. PONL is committed to partnering with nursing, health care leaders, government, and educational agencies to facilitate a smooth, successful transition to attain these desired outcomes.

The provision of patient care and coordination of patient resources is highly complex and technologically demanding. This requires professional nurses who are educationally prepared at the baccalaureate level to address and attend to these challenges. The landmark 2010 Institute of Medicine Report (IOM), *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, proposed that 80% of all RN's have a BSN by 2020. In 2019, 56% of nurses nationwide have attained this goal and the 80% goal may likely be reached by 2029 (Future of Nursing Campaign, 2019). Additionally, the IOM Report, as well as the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, noted that BSN-prepared nurses are better equipped to manage the increasing complexity involved in care delivery.

Nurses with a baccalaureate education have had a positive impact on improved patient safety than their peers without a BSN (AACN, 2017). Evidence suggests that BSN prepared graduates have better communication skills and hold expertise in care coordination (AACN, 2017). This is essential in today's healthcare arena. Higher levels of educational preparation were also related to greater professional behavior, leadership skills, holistic care with a focus on psychosocial needs, patient teaching, and continuity of care (AACN, 2017). Linda Aiken (2003) in a groundbreaking study, found that a 10% increase in hospital nurses with a baccalaureate degree decreased surgical mortality by 5%. A subsequent study confirmed these

findings. Organizations with a high percentage of BSN prepared nurses correlate positively with improved patient outcomes (Aiken et al, 2008). As a critical member of the patient care team, professional nurses require the educational preparation that places them on a par with other colleagues.

Survey of chief nursing officers has indicated their preference to hire nurses with BSN's (AACN, 2017). Facilities with or desiring American Nurses Credentialing Centers (ANCC) Magnet Recognition, reputed as the standard of excellence in hospitals, encourage hospitals to hire BSN nurses (Nursing, 2012). A requirement of Magnet recognition is that hospitals show an ongoing plan to achieve an 80% BSN employment rate by 2020 (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2017).

Other states have or are contemplating legislation which have or will mandate baccalaureate preparation for practice and/or attaining a BSN within a defined number of years from licensure. The BSN requirement for practice is supported by the American Organization for Nursing Leaders, The American Nurses Association, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, to name a few (AACN, 2017). Additionally, the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Veterans Administration all require a minimum of a BSN of their professional nurses "in the interest of providing the best patient care and leadership by its nurse corps officers (AACN, 2017, p. 8). With ongoing support of the nation's highly respected organizations for the BSN as the entry level of professional nursing, we join those who are in support of this initiative.

#### References

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