Introduction

The American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) is committed to advocating for and achieving diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and belonging within the community of nurse leaders. The mission, vision, values and strategic priorities of AONL recognizes that the success of nursing leadership is dependent on reflecting the diversity of the communities we serve.

It is the position of AONL that DEI and belonging are essential building blocks of a healthy practice environment that is also a tenet within the Code of Ethics for Nurses and aligns with the Future of Nursing 2020-2030 recommendations. The following principles are critical for nurse leaders in supporting and promoting an environment where all persons can thrive:

PRINCIPLE #1: Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are the cornerstones of human wellness.

Health care organizations will aim to establish a healthful practice/work environment that is reflective of diversity within levels, including front-line, leadership and governance teams through a commitment to inclusivity, acceptance and appropriate governance structures.

- Relationships are the true currency of nurse leaders and their teams; developing an equity-minded, diverse and inclusive workforce requires internal and external resources to align the workforce with that of the larger population within the community.
- Embracing individual lived experiences creates opportunities for all team members to learn and grow in an inclusive environment. Key components to support a diverse workforce include cultural, social and emotional differences, which are respected and celebrated.
- Welcoming a multigenerational workforce where age, wisdom and life experience are leveraged as a strength.
- Develop a workforce strategy to employ diverse groups of health care professionals and actively involve all individuals in a shared decision-making process, when/where appropriate.
- Facilitate a culture within the work environment that is conducive to open dialogue, accepts differences and fosters belonging.
- Understand your own unconscious biases and lead with a sensitivity to gender and sexual diversity, race/ethnicity, age, knowledge, skills, cultural backgrounds, values and beliefs.

PRINCIPLE #2: Creating practice environments of psychological safety with diverse teams ensures equitable, safe and effective patient-centered care.

Health care organizations will strive to develop internal and external resources that support patient-centered care and meet the needs of the diverse patient and workforce populations served.

- Build an atmosphere of belonging by defining and implementing equitable structures and processes to support psychological safety, transformation and innovation.
- Designate fiscal resources to develop programs and policies to consistently meet the needs of diverse patient populations served and underserved and include members from the local community with diverse backgrounds in organizational planning.
- Execute employment plans and strategies to attract a workforce that is reflective of the populations served.
- Educate staff members on the importance of understanding the diversity of the population served and providing equity-minded care.
- Educate communities about the rationale for collecting patient and workforce race, ethnicity, primary language, sexual orientation and gender identity data.

PRINCIPLE #3: Partnerships play a pivotal role in advancing our vision.

Health care organizations will partner with universities, schools of nursing and other organizations that educate nurses and nurse leaders to support development and implementation of policies, procedures, programs and learning environments that foster cultural intelligence and recruitment and retention of a student population that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

- Collaborate with educational institutions and health care organizations to remove barriers that impede underrepresented students and nurses from joining the nursing profession and/or moving into leadership positions.
- Engage in ongoing, systematic and focused recruitment and retention activities that include qualitative and quantitative outcomes assessment and modify policies, procedures and guidelines to eliminate inequities, based on stereotypes or unconscious and conscious bias.
- Increase the number of diverse nursing faculty to support the demand for minority nurses and enter into collaborative agreements between education and practice that offer nursing staff from diverse groups the opportunity to serve as student mentors, guest lecturers and participants in school-based health centers and/or clinical faculty.
- Recognize and appreciate the economic, emotional, social and cultural barriers to college attendance that may exist for students from underrepresented groups throughout their academic and career progression.
- Develop and implement career plans for potential candidates for nursing careers from current employees with an emphasis on those from underrepresented groups.
- Create and support community outreach programs for targeted cultural groups in collaboration with members of the local community.
- Create clinical experiences that support a diverse nursing student body and a variety of learning styles to assure students have opportunities to assess diverse patients and health care practices.
- Expand opportunities and access to education using e-learning and virtual learning platforms in the academic and practice-based environment.

- Incorporate national health literacy standards into education programs and proficiency criteria.

PRINCIPLE #4: Leveraging data, technology and research will assist in achieving the desired goal.

In partnership with statisticians and health policy experts, health care organizations will leverage technology to collect and disseminate diversity-related resources, research and information to improve patient care and track employee wellness.

- Fund opportunities for research to examine health inequity, racism in nursing or other studies of minorities in nurse leader roles that are foundational for sustainable change.
- Utilize DEI research to demonstrate the value of ongoing education and generate innovative nursing strategies for equitable, safe, timely and effective patient-centered care and healthy practice environments.
- Drive exemplary practice through the use of technology and continuous learning modalities to facilitate knowledge improvement related to DEI and belonging.
- Expand the use of technology, telehealth and artificial intelligence to assist in creating connections to underserved populations.
- Establish interventions, maintain accuracy and utilize collected data, including patient and workforce race, ethnicity, gender and primary language spoken, for use in improving patient care, safety and quality.
- Integrate the use of ethical principles for social determinants of health data to identify and address population health needs and to improve health.
- Monitor, analyze and evaluate employee wellness data for risk of burnout and early intervention.
- Use technology to stratify data in a meaningful way, recognize the value of desegregated data and identify areas for improvement.
- Establish metrics to monitor targeted diversity benchmarks.