

# Empowering Frontline Nurse Leaders with Tools to Lead

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## Introduction

The units' Clinical Nurse Coordinators (CNCs) oversee clinical operations in conjunction with the nurse manager on the inpatient unit. The CNC serves as a permanent charge nurse; while patient-facing, many CNCs provide coverage for their nurse managers and are expected to exhibit advanced leadership skills. Since the inception of the role in 2017, the CNC job description was updated to reflect the evolution of the role and expanded leadership expectations. There is no formalized leadership training for CNCs.

**SETTING:** 226 bed rehabilitation hospital with 8 inpatient units

**TIMELINE:** January 2023 – December 2023

**GOAL:** To equip CNCs with the knowledge and skills required for their expanded leadership role, to enhance their professional development, and provide them with a forum to collaborate and learn.

## Methods

### Needs Assessment

A review of the literature indicates that a formalized program for training nurse leaders is an effective intervention. Charge nurses that undergo training have noted improvements in leadership styles and resiliency<sup>1</sup>. Empowering nurse leaders both structurally and psychologically in their roles leads to increased collaboration, authentic leadership, job satisfaction, and improved work environments<sup>2</sup>.

A poll of the CNCs was conducted (n=9) to identify self-perceived leadership ability and the need for additional leadership training. Results reflected that CNCs wanted education on honing their leadership skills and opportunities to collaborate with one another.

### Planning

#### 1. Stakeholder Buy In

Inpatient nurse managers, chief nursing officer, director of nursing education, and CNCs were presented needs assessment results. Granted permission to move forward with designing a leadership training series.

#### 2. Establishing a Framework

The American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) Nurse Manager Competencies were used as a framework for planning education. This framework focuses on the art of leadership, the science of leadership, and the leader within<sup>3</sup>. In addition to this framework, a CNC skills checklist was developed to further establish role expectations.

#### 3. Content & Educational Design

- Planning committee: 2 nurse managers + 1 nurse educator
- Content drawn from AONL's competency framework, CNC role expectations in the updated job description, and requests mentioned in the CNC poll.
- Topics: scope of practice, conflict management, communication, leadership styles, budget, onboarding, staffing, discipline, emergency management, EMR skills, and opportunities for professional advancement.

#### 4. Format

- Summer & Fall cohorts
- Three 3 hour education with each session focusing on one of the AONL framework themes.
- 1:1 nurse manager mentorship each scheduling period as an adjunct to classroom learning. The literature revealed that assigned mentorship in addition to classroom learning is critical in increasing perceived leadership competence<sup>4</sup>.

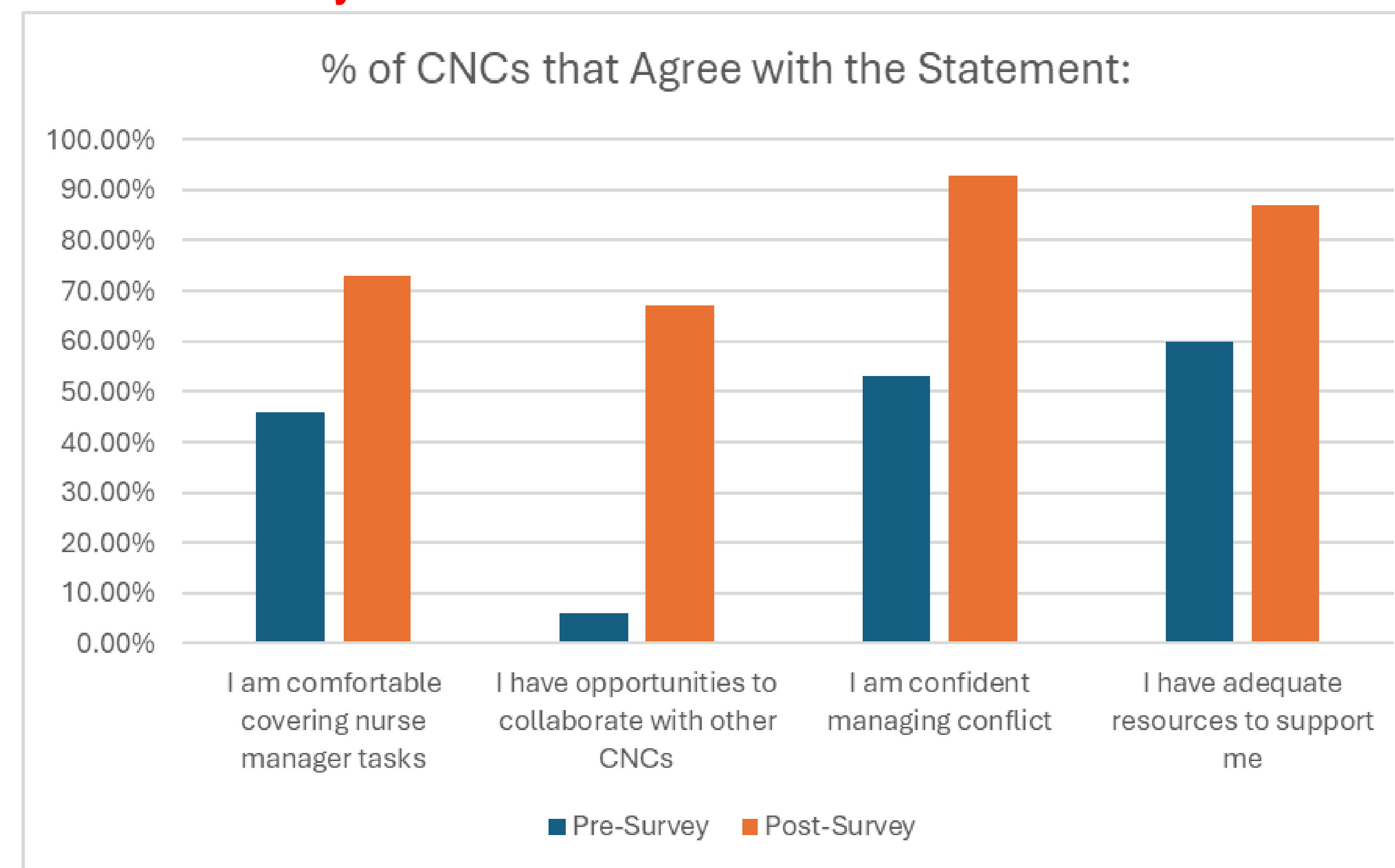
## Results

Demographics	
< 1 year experience in role	6 RNs
1-2 years experience in role	5 RNs
3-4 years experience in role	0 RNs
5+ years experience in role	4 RNs

### Outcome Measurements

- Pre and post surveys for the CNCs (n=15)
- Course evaluations (n=18); includes 3 nurse leaders participating that were not CNCs
- Pre and post surveys for the nurse managers (n=8 and n=6)

### Pre & Post Surveys



- **87%** of CNCs strongly agree that they understand the CNC role and expectations post-intervention (increase of 67%).
- **100%** of CNCs agree that they understand the role of the nurse manager post-intervention (increase of 33%).
- **100%** of CNCs agree they are likely to use the resources discussed in the classroom.

### Course Evaluations

- **100%** of CNCs agreed or strongly agreed that this program was helpful
- Most helpful presentations: *Conflict management* and *Human Resources*

### How will you incorporate this into you practice?

"More confident for approaching conflict, filling in for manager responsibilities, and handling staffing."

"Talking to other CNCs and understanding there are many additional resource for me to use."

"Pursue more opportunities, hungry for more after this series!"

### Nurse Manager Feedback

- **83%** of nurse managers feel comfortable allowing their CNC to provide managerial coverage; this is an increase of 58%
- **67%** of nurse managers agree that their CNC is being utilized to their full potential
- **33%** of managers reported an increase in mentorship prioritization

## Conclusion

In conclusion, formalized leadership training yielded positive results on all three outcome measurements. There were significant improvements in CNC scores on every survey item. Additionally, objective data from the nurse managers revealed an increase in the CNCs' ability to provide managerial coverage. Anecdotally, there was overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program from both CNCs and nurse managers.

Of note, the most positive feedback and improved scores were from the CNCs with < 1 year of experience in their roles. It is our recommendation to prioritize formalized leadership training during onboarding new nurse leaders. Despite clinical expertise, it is common for new nurse leaders to experience hardship during this transition from expert to novice<sup>5</sup>.

### Sustainment

- Ongoing mentorship with CNC and nurse manager
- Microsoft Teams channel utilized to increase collaboration and as a repository for shared resources
- Optimize use of CNC skills checklist upon onboarding new CNCs
- Quarterly CNC meeting to incorporate more leadership-focused content

### Limitations

#### Staffing

While alternative charge nurses were assigned during these class times, we recognize that the busy workflow of the unit comes first. For CNCs who were working on the unit the first portion of their day, it was sometimes challenging for them to get to class on time. On a few occasions, CNCs were pulled to the floor and had to make up content.

#### Survey Response

Low response rate may have impacted the CNC needs assessment and the nurse manager post-survey. Due to the nature of the surveys, the responses were kept anonymous to elicit the most honest feedback. It was challenging to hunt down any missing responses. Additionally, there were several nurse manager turnovers in 2023; some of the managers that took the post-survey never participated in the pre-survey. Averages were taken for the outcome measurements.

## References

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