

# Forging Future Titans; Mastering Competencies and Handoff for Tomorrow's Chief Nurses



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**Purpose:** A community hospital Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) identified a need for succession planning for nurse leaders at all levels as future nurse executives and prepare them for the critical and dynamic role of the Chief Nurse. Competencies were identified through the American Organization of Nurse Leaders (AONL) to aid in the bridge between national standards and build a local standard and application to use for onboarding. This led one CNO to develop a tool that was used to identify-onboard and mentor a new CNO as they transition into the role and provide a guide for the exiting and or transitioning out CNO. This was replicated and shared.

**Strategy:** The CNO sought to identify high performers with skill sets that align with many of the nurse executive competencies of AONL, had the personality and intrinsic desire to move into a CNO or high-level leadership role, and provide them with a framework to onboard, and orient themselves to the role. A pertinent ask was "Please do not throw me to the fire with a desk and a pen." The executive also developed a strategy for the departing CNO to handoff key information and work to focus on key competencies and themes. "Don't boil the ocean", as to provide a guide and framework without overwhelming the new CNO but allow for mentoring and competency development.

**Implementation:** Aligned with the strategic priorities of AONL and utilizing the AONL Nurse executive competencies as a guide, the initiative was spearheaded by the CNO, Chief Operating Officer as well as the Director of Human resources as a proactive approach with multiple emerging leaders. This was used at one location for the incoming and outgoing CNO. This was also replicated at a second facility with the incoming CNO and offered as a framework for other Chief Nurses.

**Focus and Results:** The outcomes yielded a successful identification, integration and assimilation of the new CNO and set up a proactive competency review and development plan. Future state includes a digital application with learn as you go and sharable competencies and onboarding guide that is customizable to the need and the site of practice for the new CNO. Creating a library of tactics to share across the community of CNO's.

## Successful Outcomes:

**Leadership and Readiness:** Confidence in CNO, ability to assist with development of skills where needed.

**Succession planning:** The idea that we can "grow our own" or grow a new leader based on skill mix and align with cultural fit was confidence boosting to all and glad to give the time the CNO needs to gain core competencies.

**Onboarding:** The one size fits all approach to orientation in this role does not fit here. The CNO's all let who knows it better than an onboarding plan and focus areas from other CNO's and areas to target and focus and allow time to discuss and understand the complexities of the role and responsibilities that may vary from organization to organization. Culturally, this transition *felt good* as we welcomed our new CNO, and she was immediately welcomed into the team. Nursing felt confident in her abilities and her purpose as we had trust there was a good communication between the outgoing and incoming CNO. The endorsement publicly and on what they were being onboarded to gained confidence and the outgoing CNO endorsement helped the trust and integration.

**Leadership and Organizational Fit:** Operational onboarding confidence and trust. One COO reported that "the new CNO integrated with the organization, team, role and competencies with clear deliverables focus and goals. It felt like there was knowledge of the need and priorities and was able to integrate quickly and how they would approach and prioritize. Another CHRO reported that "She is an amazing CNO and understands our culture, she was mentored by the exiting CNO and her nursing background and development plan led to her ongoing success and confidence in the executive team". A comment was made by one leader that the CNO seems to have a roadmap for a lonely job and despite variation at different organizations, they seem to know where to prioritize and focus areas in the first 90 days to year and onward. A CNO Strategic plan and appreciate the AONL Fellowship and peer network for the success as well as guiding competencies.

**Replication:** One CNO who was mentored by the exiting CNO during the pandemic stated value in a more structured competency-based onboarding process. This was utilized as they brought in a new ACNO/ CNO to their organization. This resulted in rapid assimilation and onboarding and structured guide to focus areas and key topics to know at the organization. The incoming CNO felt supported and using the guide was part of the key to the success. Another CNO reported feeling that the ability to be introduced with confidence and validation by the trusted CNO was helpful to staff who reported confidence the CNO "knows where we are on our nursing journey and that [she] would not drop the ball on our progress yet take the reigns and continue the journey.

### Onboarding Plan: (More than a Binder or Checklist)

Identify- Desire- Competencies- Development Needs- Timeline- Communication and Transition Planning.

**Desire:** Stated desire to lead in a CNO or Like Role (What is your "Why"). Help with keeping focus on internal drive and external asks.

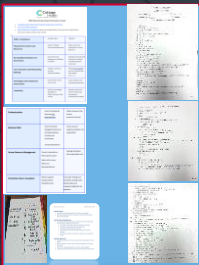
**Personal Connection:** alliances are important in this work, connect with CNO Forums/ groups organizations like AONL or local state chapters.

**Competencies:** Current leadership Competencies assessment and gap analysis

**Development Needs:** Plan in Action, not just content, but introductions, placed at the right meetings, Executive Presence, external leader outreach and presence.

**Communication:** Visually and in writing, place the incumbent in positions of authority, invite to higher level events, cover for current CNO, Personal Introductions, staff engagement.

**Ongoing Mentoring Program:** Personal and Pay it forward, Set Touch base check ins quarterly.



Identification of need	Need Urgency	Learning Assessment	Settle In Place	Role expectations-	External Development	Professional Presence:	Closure and review	Communication
Succession plan	Urgent handoff	Learning Needs	Getting your Groove	Define Expectations	Timeline, programs	Internal Representation	Evaluation tool	Internal
Urgency	Future Need	Competency Evaluation	Identify delegation needs	Competency ad JD Alignment	External Network	External representation	Handoff Guide for CEO	External
Handoff Ability		Gap Analysis	Build Confidence in team	Mentor Identified	Peer Support Groups	Professional committees		Professional Network
Readiness Assessment				Measures of Success	Resources	Competency Gap		Identifying Authority
Onboarding Capacity								



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