

FROM BEDSIDE TO POLICY: Mobilizing Nurses for Health Care Advocacy & Reform

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OVERVIEW

The role of nurses in shaping health care policies is increasingly important. Memorial Hermann Health System (MHHS) in Houston, Texas, has implemented a targeted approach to harness our 14,000-strong nursing workforce to enact meaningful policy change through nurse advocacy and being the voice of change. Through collaboration with their government relations (G.R.) team, Memorial Hermann is creating a culture of nurse advocacy across our organization and addressing critical issues.

BACKGROUND

Recognizing that individual nurses often lack confidence, knowledge and resources to participate in professional advocacy, Memorial Hermann, in collaboration with professional organizations and enterprise government relations partners, aims to bridge this gap by empowering nurses to advocate for change. The organization has emphasized collective advocacy efforts to unify nurses' voices and provide opportunities to influence policy. Currently, less than 7% of the 400,000 nurses in the system's state are members of professional organizations, highlighting the need for collective action to for creating a culture of advocacy within the nursing profession.

PURPOSE

MHHS's approach to building a culture of nurse advocacy serves as a model to empower their nursing workforce and influence policy changes that benefit the profession and patient care by:

- Engaging nurses in policy advocacy, legislative collaboration and health care reform initiatives
- Building partnerships with government relations teams to amplify frontline nursing influence on policy
- Educating nurses about nursing advocacy and their role in influencing policy through a structured training course with continuing education credits provided

INTERVENTION



OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

- Legislative success through the passage of key legislation
- Representative support of to carry key mental health legislation at nursing request
- Increased grassroots mobilization through self-engagement of MHHS nurses with ongoing advocacy activities
- Positive course impact of Advocacy 101: The Role of Nursing in Advocacy with 61 attendees and an average course rating of 4.79
- Requests for continuous advocacy education – Advocacy 201 in development for Fall 2025
- Creation of more open communication and regular updates to frontline nurses
- Enterprise support for resource allocation to support ongoing education and MHHS Nurses Day at the Capitol activities

"Just the push I needed to make a change and advocate for my profession by opening a dialogue with my representative." – MHHS RN

"This gave me a good framework for crafting an elevator pitch to policymakers that I plan to use." – MHHS RN

UNIQUELY INNOVATIVE

Course development and dissemination with continuing education credit:

- Advocacy 101: The Role of Nursing in Advocacy

Course topics discussed:

- What is nurse advocacy and why should we advocate for policy?
- What are the MHHS priorities for nursing advocacy?
- How do you represent nursing in advocacy?
- What does advocacy look like in action?
- How do you specifically advocate for the priorities?
- Breakout session with scenario-based practice time
- Logistics overview for MHHS Nurses Day at the Capitol

LESSONS LEARNED

- Strategic partnerships with your G.R. team is crucial
- Nurses' involvement in professional organizations and policy advocacy helps enact meaningful change.
- Increased awareness and education are a key priority to develop nurses' knowledge.
- There is an overwhelming need for awareness and education
- Development and delivery of education well in advance of an organized Nurses' Day event facilitates meaningful advocacy.



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