

2011 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization of the approximately 41,000 registered nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). NOVA has identified several areas of concern. Some require legislation, some require funding, and others need to be supported and implemented by the VA.

Budget. The primary goal of VA nurses is to have adequate resources to provide high quality patient care and ensure the VA continues to be a leader in health care. In order to accomplish this goal, NOVA supports the following:

- Adequate funds to support veterans and staff members returning from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Adequate discretionary funding for the aging infrastructure of the VA and medical/surgical tertiary care.
- Recurring funding for special initiatives such as Patient Aligned Care Teams and others.

VACO Organizational Realignment. Monitor VACO Organizational Realignment and its impact on Nursing Service.

Retention and Recruitment. In order for VA to become the employer of choice for health care professionals across the Nation, human resource departments as well as funding to support VA Nursing Academy programs must be sustained and expanded. In order to accomplish this, NOVA supports the following:

- *Human Resource Departments Must Receive Adequate Training and Support.* We appreciate VA's efforts to continue to enhance and support labor/employee relations.
- *Hiring Freezes.* Inadequate budgets can result in hiring slow-downs and freezes which have a negative impact on recruitment and retention and quality of care.
- *Programs to Help Decrease Delays in Hiring Licensed Staff.* Continue to support VA's efforts in this regard.
- Examine and follow the ramifications of the Federal Pay Freeze and proposed retirement changes on the VHA workforce, especially nursing.

- Continued support for Office of Nursing Service RN Residency Pilot with funding for additional pilots.
- Support the ongoing efforts of VHA to streamline the hiring and credentialing of Title 38 employees.
- Support for the Institute of Medicine, “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.”

The four key messages include:

- Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training;
- Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression;
- Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health care professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States; and
- Effective workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure.

The eight recommendations include:

- Remove scope-of-practice barriers;
- Expand opportunities for nurses to lead and diffuse collaborative improvement efforts;
- Implement nurse residency programs;
- Increase the proportion of nurses with baccalaureate degree to 80 percent by 2020;
- Double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020;
- Ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning;
- Prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health; and
- Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of interprofessional health care workforce data.

Information Technology. NOVA supports the improvement in the support of information technology to the field in order to allow for increased patient safety, software usability and data standardization for integrated patient health care records across the system. NOVA supports the following:

- Development and release of a vista patient care flow sheet to document care provided at the bedside.
- Updating the format of the computerized medical record to include easily accessible decision support software.
- Continue appropriate funding to support current system demands and updates for CPRS, BCMA imaging (vista clinical applications).

Supply Processing and Distribution. There needs to be adequate funding, support and resources for Supply and Processing now assigned to Nurse Executives.