

LIVEWELL NURSING

Promoting a Healthy Work Environment: A Perspective on Awareness and Prevention for Frontline Nurses

By: Angela Mitchell, CNO



Frontline nurses are essential in shaping the work environment in healthcare settings. Responsibilities extend beyond delivering care. Nurses must actively advocate for a healthy workplace that promotes safety, collaboration, and professional growth. Frontline nurses are tasked with a range of responsibilities, including providing patient care, monitoring health conditions, and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams. However, the role of the nurse also includes advocating for their own well-being and that of their colleagues. The American Nurses Association (ANA, 2021) states that nurses have a professional obligation to create and maintain a safe and ethical working environment. Key responsibilities include:

1. **Advocating for Safety:** Nurses must ensure compliance with safety protocols to protect both patients and staff. This includes reporting hazards, mistakes, near misses and participating in continuous quality improvement to promote a culture of safety.

Angela Mitchell

2. **Promoting Effective Communication:** Open communication among team members is vital for patient safety and team cohesion. Nurses are responsible for sharing critical patient information and expressing concerns about workplace issues promptly, even when it is uncomfortable.

3. **Supporting Colleagues:** Fostering a supportive environment reduces stress and enhances morale. Simple acts of encouragement can significantly impact the emotional well-being of team members.

4. **Participating in Professional Development:** Engaging in ongoing education not only enhances our skills but also sets a standard for excellence within our teams, creating a culture of continuous improvement.

To promote a healthy work environment, nurses can implement the following awareness and prevention strategies:

1. **Participate in Regular Team Meetings and Huddles:** Being active in regular meetings allows team members to discuss challenges, share successes, and address concerns. This practice enhances communication and fosters a sense of community.

2. **Leverage peer to peer support:** Establishing peer mentoring or support can help nurses cope with stress and share strategies for managing workplace challenges. This initiative promotes resilience and camaraderie among staff.

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3. **Work-Life Balance:** Nurses must continue to work at prioritizing self – care. Make time for physical activity, healthy eating and adequate sleep. Engage in hobbies that bring joy and relaxation. Incorporate mindfulness practices such as meditation or deep breathing exercises. Always take lunches and breaks throughout the shift to mentally recharge.

4. **Complete Training on Conflict Resolution:** Participating in training sessions focused on conflict resolution and effective communication can equip nurses with the tools to handle interpersonal issues constructively, reducing potential workplace tensions.

5. **Mental Health Resources:** It's crucial for all nurses to have an awareness about mental health resources and reach out for help when needed.

Certain traits among frontline workers can significantly contribute to a healthy work environment:

1. **Empathy:** Understanding and supporting each other's emotional and professional needs fosters a compassionate atmosphere, enhancing teamwork and collaboration (Buljak et al., 2020).

2. **Resilience:** The ability to cope with stress and bounce back from challenges is crucial for maintaining a positive workplace (Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021).

3. **Collaboration:** Team-oriented individuals who prioritize collaboration contribute to a culture of inclusivity and shared responsibility, which enhances problem-solving (Pressley & Garside, 2023).

4. **Integrity:** Upholding ethical standards fosters trust among team members, essential for a healthy work environment (ANA, 2021).

Conversely, the following traits can undermine a healthy workplace:

1. **Negativity:** A pessimistic attitude can be contagious and demoralizing, creating a hostile work environment that increases stress and burnout (Mihdawi et al., 2020).

2. **Lack of Communication:** Poor communication leads to misunderstandings and errors, fostering feelings of isolation and frustration among nurses.

3. **Resistance to Change:** An unwillingness to adapt to new protocols can hinder organizational improvement, negatively impacting care delivery.

4. **Inflexibility:** Rigid attitudes toward teamwork can create barriers to collaboration and lead to resentment among colleagues.

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All team members play a vital role in promoting a healthy work environment through awareness and prevention strategies. By understanding our duties and responsibilities, embracing desirable traits, and addressing negative behaviors, we can cultivate a culture of safety and well-being. Upholding professional obligations not only benefits nurses but also enhances the quality of services provided to the community. Live Well.



References

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SUBMISSIONS

Please e-mail submission (ideas, photos, articles, trainings, dates, accolades, local or national news, etc.) to Araceli.Casas@sdcounty.ca.gov

For consideration in next issue, please submit entries by close of business on October 18, 2024. Submission limits: 125-275 words

October Topic: *Health Literacy*



**Access the County's EBSCO
Health Homepage using a
Universal Link**

<https://my.openathens.net/>

Preparedness and Awareness Camp Connect 2024

By: Liberty Awa, MSN, RN, PHN, PHN Manager, Office of Nursing Excellence

Camp Connect is a unique program designed to reunite siblings separated by their placement in the foster care system. The County of San Diego, in conjunction with a local non-profit, Promises2Kids, has collaborated to host this interactive opportunity since 2008 [Camp Connect - San Diego Foster Children Support & Services - Promises2Kids](#). Camp Connect hosts a variety of monthly activities or outings for youth to bond with their siblings, including a six-day camp experience in Julian, CA. This year's camp was held from August 1, 2024, to August 6, 2024. Youth in attendance had the opportunity to participate in the following activities: swimming, horseback riding, zip lining, arts & crafts, slip and slide, games, and other activities. Medical Care Services, Office of Nursing Excellence (ONE) supported in hosting the 16th annual summer Camp Connect in Julian, CA. Eighty siblings separated in foster care attended and enjoyed the numerous activities and time to reconnect with their siblings. Twenty-eight nurses, five pharmacists, and one medical provider across the agency supported Camp Connect. The amazing County clinical team supported and leveraged an environment of fun and safety, which allowed the youth to set aside their trauma and enjoy being a kid while spending time with their siblings.



Special thanks to everyone that participated in this heartwarming effort (pictured for Intake Day 08/01/2024):

Dr. Kelly Motadel, Andrea Huerta, Araceli Casas, Drew Berlin, Liberty Awa, Mariana Badial, Angi Mitchell, CSUSM Nursing Students, Rebekah Huppe, Arlene Pfaff, Clarissa Boer, Luisa Sawyer, Nicole Whitening, Monica Hernandez, Jessica Jones, Kevin Kavanagh, Khanh Huynh, Annette Solorio, Donna West, Rabie Abasi, Christopher Ford, Letisha Kingsbury, Alejandra Sanchez Lopez, Yasmin Gaddum, Laura Green, Mariana Delgadillo, Western Governors University Nursing Student, Eloisa Melendez.

Live Well Nursing Newsletter: Preparedness and Awareness

Bre'Aja Bruce, Public Health Nurse

Public Health Nurses (PHNs) play a critical role when it comes to preparedness and awareness. They regularly shift their focus and expertise to mirror the needs of their community. This entails anticipating potential health threats and having plans in place to address them, as well as involving and educating the community about these threats and proactive measures they can take.

One thing the Epidemiology/Bioterrorism unit does to help in this effort is lead the Public Health Centers (PHCs) as they plan and finalize their 2024 Flu Points of Dispensing (PODs). The purpose of a POD is to efficiently distribute preventive measures to the community, with the goal of reducing the negative impact of potential public health threats on individuals who have not yet been affected (Kershner et al., 2022). Annual Flu PODs provide staff the opportunity to strengthen their capacity, enhance their skills and to respond effectively to real-world disasters, where they will assist in establishing distribution sites around the county. We witnessed firsthand during the COVID-19 pandemic how critical PODs were in ensuring timely access to vaccines. PODs helped facilitate the rapid administration of thousands of doses across San Diego County, contributing to widespread immunity and paving the way toward recovery. Read more about how the CDC uses existing vaccine distribution, tracking, and monitoring systems to support emergency responses here.

PHNs have the unique role to extend our reach beyond traditional healthcare settings by organizing outreach programs and community engagement activities, such as Flu PODs, all with the goal in mind of helping to build healthier communities that will create a foundation of resilience and serve us in times of need.

SDSU COVID POD 2021

(more images on next page)



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(Continued) Live Well Nursing Newsletter: Preparedness and Awareness
Bre'Aja Bruce, Public Health Nurse



South PHC Flu POD 2023

Central PHC Flu POD 2023



Live Well Nursing Newsletter: Preparedness and Awareness

Kaila Domingo, BSN, RN, PHN-Rural Health Discharge Program-East Public Health Center

In the Rural Health Discharge Program, our patients are at risk of natural disaster emergencies such as wildfires and flash floods. We promote preparedness and awareness by educating patients on fire safety and providing resources. Below are resources available for you, your families, communities and patients so we can all be aware and prepared for any emergency.

- Fire safety includes keeping a **defensible space** (or buffer) around the home which helps slow or stop the spread of fires. Learn more here: <https://firesafesdcounty.org/>
- A **Vial of Life** is used to share pertinent information with emergency personnel in case a person is unable to speak (e.g. medical emergency). The Vial of Life is a paper containing pertinent medical, insurance, health care directives, emergency contact, and pet information. The paper is placed inside a magnetized, red sleeve then placed on the refrigerator. A “Vial of Life” sticker is also placed on the home’s front window. Vials of Life can be obtained from AIS, CalFire/San Diego County Fire and most fire departments. Anyone is eligible.
- The **CalFire/San Diego County Fire’s Residential KnoxBox Program** allows firefighters quick access to your home in case of an emergency. It also helps prevent repairs and repair costs by avoiding breaking down doors. This program is free, but residents must meet eligibility requirements. Please note that the City of San Diego has its own Knox Box program with a fee of \$153.00. Learn more here: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sdcfa/crr-main-menu/ResidentialKnoxBox.html> and <https://www.sandiego.gov/fire/fireprev/knoxbox>



The Impact of a Nurse's Awareness

by Eloisa Melendez, PHN Supervisor, MCS - Office of Nursing Excellence

As Public Health Nurses go out into the field to provide valuable services to underserved populations in our communities, there is a constant thought of “how can I make this easier or better for my clients?”. Often, nurses see firsthand the gaps in service and challenges individuals face daily to access the care and support they need. Awareness of these gaps and continued collaboration with community partners will only help to “improve access to care” and “facilitate the implementation of other strategies” that will serve to best meet client needs (Morris, et al., 2024). In August, at the Street Medicine Initiative Quarterly Meeting, Public Health Nurses from the Homeless Outreach Team (PHN HOT Team) had an opportunity to share their experiences, discuss services they provide to unsheltered individuals, and learn about what other community partners can offer. As new situations and vulnerable individuals are encountered daily, our unique perspective of what individuals face gives us an opportunity to change and improve systems. While at the Street Medicine Summit, case scenarios were provided and our PHN HOT Team with other community partners were able to work through types of challenges individuals are facing. Throughout the process we discussed the understanding to meet the patient where they are at, addressed most urgent concerns then identified available community services that could be offered. While we understood there were many resources available, we also noted that barriers such as lack of transportation and phone, or physical or mental health limitations of an individual prevented them from receiving these services. Having this understanding allowed us to take a step back and be sure to address those basic needs first before moving on. Nurses are powerful in changing someone’s outlook by being mindful of their situations and helping to navigate these barriers alongside their clients to prepare them for success in meeting their needs.



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