

# National Survey for Essential Nursing Leadership Behaviors

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## BACKGROUND

Nursing students need to be educated to lead high quality care in complex healthcare environments (Institute of Medicine, 2010). However, little detail exists regarding what hospital nurse leaders believe are vital behaviors of nursing students and new nurses.

## PURPOSE

Aim: To determine what hospital nurse leaders throughout the United States believe are the essential professional behaviors baccalaureate nursing students should acquire. Our research was based on the need to identify specific behaviors that nursing students need to prepare them for their professional nursing role.

## METHODS

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

- The national Hospital Nurse Leader Perspectives (HNLP) survey was created.
- The HNLP was created from a pilot survey administered to hospital nurse leaders in the Midwest.
- The 74-item HNLP survey was based on 5 key categories:
  - Change
  - Communication
  - Conflict
  - Leadership
  - Self-Awareness
- Each category contained 7-11 items using a 5-point Likert scale format with 1=not at all important, 2=slightly important, 3=moderately important, 4=very important, and 5=absolutely essential.
- 12 demographic items were included at the end of the survey.

### RECRUITMENT

- Eligible participants: Registered nurses working in the hospital setting as nurse executives, administrators, managers, or educators.
- Sampling Technique: Stratified sampling was used to recruit 10-25 hospitals from each state.

### DATA COLLECTION

- The HNLP survey was available in an electronic and paper form.
- Electronic version was distributed through a link in an email and a national nurse executive newsletter.
- Paper version was sent through the mail.
- 429 HNLP surveys were received.
- Data from the paper surveys were manually entered into Qualtrics.
- Electronic and paper copies were merged into one data set in IBM SPSS 20.
- 397 surveys remained after removing incomplete surveys and ineligible respondents.

### DATA ANALYSIS

- IBM SPSS 20 was used to analyze the HNLP survey data.
- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.
- The Friedman test for rank order data was used to analyze the rankings of the categories.

## RESULTS

### RANKING OF CATEGORIES

**Table 1. Professional Behaviors Ranked in Order of Importance**

Category	Ranking	Friedman's Test for Rank Order Data
Communication	1	1.29
Self-Awareness	2	2.85
Change	3*	3.41
Conflict	3*	3.41
Leadership	5	4.04

\*Note: Both change and conflict received the same ranking.

### ITEMS WITHIN EACH CATEGORY

- Items within each of the five categories were analyzed.
- Within each category, the items with the two highest means were:

#### Communication

- Communication with patients (Mean=4.84)
- Communication with families (M=4.76)

#### Self-Awareness

- Ability to accept constructive criticism (M=4.58)
- Ability to learn from failure (M=4.40)

#### Change

- Ability to manage change (M=4.33)
- Acceptance of change (M=4.32)

#### Conflict

- Ability to learn conflict resolution techniques (M=4.34)
- Ability to identify signs of aggressive behavior in patients (M=4.28)
- Ability to identify signs of aggressive behavior in family members (M=4.28)

#### Leadership

- Develop prioritization skills (M=4.65)
- Ability to be considerate towards coworkers (M=4.32)

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- Geographic distribution: 1-64 surveys received from each state.

**Table 2. Number of Nurses by Highest Education Level**

Education Level	Frequency (n)
Diploma	4
Associate Degree	16
Baccalaureate Degree	118
Master's Degree	218
Doctoral Degree	40
No Response	1

## DISCUSSION

- Communication was overwhelmingly ranked as the most important professional behavior.
- Hospital nurse leaders clearly indicated communication is an important professional behavior that nursing students need to develop in order to be effective nurse leaders.
- Current nurse leaders are indicating they are looking for nurses that can communicate well.
- These findings are similar to the previous findings from the pilot survey conducted in the Midwest.
- Key limitations:
  - Convenience sample
  - Stratified sampling technique used; however, surveys were completed on a volunteer basis

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Schools should focus their curriculum on the following:
  - Effectively communicating with patients and families
  - Accepting criticism and learning from failure
  - Prioritization skills and consideration towards coworkers
  - Teaching signs of aggressive behavior and conflict resolution techniques
  - Managing and accepting change

## REFERENCE

Institute of Medicine. (2010). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.



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