

We Strive for More in 2024: Survey Results

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Background/Significance

With the movement to team-based delivery of healthcare services, it is imperative that the role of the ambulatory care nurse is valued by patients, providers, and healthcare systems, and that nurses themselves can articulate their impact on healthcare outcomes. The American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) seeks to make that value known to employers and policymakers through effective advocacy and resources, including *The Role of the Registered Nurse in Ambulatory Care Position Statement* (AAACN, 2023). AAACN's Advocacy Committee, formerly known as the Legislative Team, is charged with supporting the membership through activities that influence policies impacting the specialty of ambulatory care nursing. To explore and determine current engagement by members and identify advocacy priority needs, the Advocacy Committee recently conducted a survey of members and conference attendees.

Survey Methodology

An online survey was distributed in spring 2024 at the AAACN Annual Conference. Participants were provided a QR code to access the survey. All AAACN members were subsequently sent an email directing them to the Advocacy Committee community space on the AAACN website to access the online survey. A reminder email was sent to the membership 1 week later. The survey comprised nine items, including questions for respondents to identify their roles and practice settings, forced choice answers using Likert-type rating scales, and write-in options for certain questions.



Data Analysis

Quantitative question responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine means and frequency of responses on the rating scale items. For the write-in entries, content analysis was conducted to examine the frequency of responses. Codes were assigned based on frequency of responses and elements in the AAACN *Ambulatory Care Nursing Conceptual Framework*. Codes were analyzed using ATLAS.ti to group codes and identify themes.

Results

A total of 232 participants responded to the survey, representing approximately 5% of AAACN's current membership. Respondents were asked to identify their employment settings and practice settings using a predefined set of category options. See Table 1 for responses by practice setting. Of the 232 respondents, 134 (58%) indicated they were not in direct patient care roles.

Member Engagement in Advocacy Activities

The survey included items for members to rate their level of understanding about, involvement in, and perceptions of their ability to impact policy through advocacy at the local, state, or federal levels. Mean scores on these items are presented in Table 2.

The first item in this series of questions asked about the level of involvement in advocacy efforts, with 34.9% of respondents indicating they were involved in engaging in advocacy within their organization. Approximately 19% indicated little or no involvement in these efforts within their organization. The other items in this series of questions asked respondents to indicate their level of knowledge and ability to impact policy at the organizational level. More than half (57.1%) rated their knowledge of how to impact organizational policies at 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1-5; 1=low, 5=high). When asked about perceived ability to impact policy, roughly 49% rated their

Table 1.
Employment and Practice Settings of Survey Respondents

Employment Setting	N	%
For profit	20	9%
Not for profit	129	56%
Public health entity	13	6%
FQHC/community health center	15	6%
Federal entity	27	12%
Insurance company/accountable care organization	3	1%
Other	15	6%
Practice Setting	N	%
Ambulatory surgery center	4	2%
Hospital system-based primary care	60	26%
Hospital system-based multispecialty practice	76	33%
Infusion/dialysis center	1	0%
Insurance company/managed care organization	3	1%
Private specialty clinic or multispecialty practices	8	3%
Private primary care clinic	5	2%
Public health run clinic	8	3%
VA or military	14	6%
Other	52	23%

Table 2.
Member Perceptions of Ability and Involvement in Advocacy Efforts

Statement	Mean*
I regularly engage in advocacy to support myself and my colleagues within my organization.	3.58
I understand how to influence policies within my organization.	3.53
I am able to influence policies within my organization.	3.38
I am knowledgeable about policy issues impacting my profession and specialty.	3.51
I understand how I can impact policy at the state or federal level.	2.83

*On scale of 1-5 (1=little involvement, 5=heavily involved)

ability to impact policy at 4 or 5 on the scale. Approximately 21.6% of respondents rated their knowledge on a scale of 1 or 2, while roughly 25% of respondents rated their ability to influence organizational policy at 1 or 2 on the scale.

When asked about interactions with elected officials at the state level, 64% (n=148) indicated they had not interacted with their elected officials while 36% (n=84) indicated they had interacted with state elected officials. The survey did not specifically ask

about interactions with federal elected officials. Two additional items asked about member perceptions of knowledge related to policy issues impacting the profession and specialty of ambulatory care nursing, as well as member perceptions about ability to impact policies affecting the profession. More than half (55.2%) rated their knowledge about policy issues impacting the profession at either 4 or 5 on the scale of 1-5 (1=low, 5=high), with 25% of respondents rating their knowledge at 1 or 2 on the 5-point scale.

Finally, respondents were asked about their perceived understanding of how to impact policy at the state or federal level. Roughly 32% of respondents rated their understanding of how to influence policy at the state or federal level at 4 or 5 out of 5 (1=low, 5=high). Another 63.4% of respondents rated their understanding at 1 or 2 on the scale.

Qualitative Results

Participants shared a wide range of organizational, state, and national legislative and regulatory priority areas of concern. The top five overarching themes identified were: (1) professional practice and the role of the ambulatory care nurse, (2) reimbursement, (3) staffing, (4) organizational workforce issues, and (5) workplace violence/safety. Table 3 shows the subthemes included within each of these legislative priorities. Additional issues identified on the survey included improving access to care; promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; expansion of compact licenses; telehealth reimbursement and guidelines; and workforce development.

Discussion

The findings indicate more than one-third of respondents are impacting policy at the organizational level; however, this finding may be impacted by the high number of respondents who indicated not being in a direct patient care role and who may be in leadership positions within their organizations. More than half of respondents indicated they had interactions with state elected officials. Examination of these findings demonstrates there are opportunities to enhance member participation in advocacy efforts by developing knowledge and self-efficacy related to advocacy at all levels (organizational, state, and federal).

The need to better articulate the role of the ambulatory care nurse and ensure ambulatory care nurses are embedded in roles that fully utilize their skills and abilities is critical. Ensuring

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Table 3.
Top Five Legislative Priorities of AAACN Members

Theme	Subthemes
Professional practice and the role of the ambulatory care nurse	Scope of practice and/or top of scope practice for RN/LPN/APRN Title protection Role clarity Medical assistant scope of practice clarification
Reimbursement	General billing Billing for nursing services
Staffing	Staffing models Safe staffing ratios
Organizational workforce issues	Recruitment Retention Burnout Well-being
Workplace violence/safety	Safe working environment Individuals accountable for their action

ambulatory care RNs are valued by organizations and policy makers emerged as a top priority among respondents. Additionally, reimbursement for nursing services was identified as a priority issue. Other priorities included the need to standardize and/or provide recommendations regarding staffing and ensure the workplace environment is safe.

Limitations

As is the case with all surveys, there are limitations to our findings. These include a small sample of the membership responding to the survey and lack of clarity on the choice responses for items asking about perceived level of knowledge (the scale on the survey had respondents choose from little involvement to heavily involved). Other limitations that likely impacted response rates included the

need to go to the “Communities” area of the AAACN website to answer the survey, and a short response time of 1 week to complete the survey.

Conclusion/Next Steps

The findings from this survey indicate respondents feel less prepared to impact policy at the state and federal level than at the organizational level. These insights will guide the Advocacy Committee and AAACN to make investments to support member engagement in advocacy. Additionally, findings from this survey identified key policy issues for consideration. The Advocacy Committee is working to create a unified advocacy platform with specific recommended strategies for action to be presented to the AAACN Board of Directors. These actions may include developing additional resources and educational

strategies to enhance knowledge and skills to impact policy, developing strategic partnerships, and creating opportunities for members to engage in direct policy advocacy at the organizational, state, and federal levels. ●

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Reference

American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nurses. (2023). *The role of the registered nurse in ambulatory care position statement*. <https://www.aaacn.org/sites/default/files/documents/PositionStatementRN.pdf>