

AMSN Advocacy Toolkit User Guide

Purpose

The AMSN Advocacy Toolkit was developed to help medical-surgical nurses build confidence and competency in advocacy. The toolkit introduces nurse advocacy with essential topics, tools, and examples. It will aid any nursing professional—from student to CEO—in becoming more confident and engaged. While this toolkit prioritizes the medical-surgical nurse perspective, the principles and recommendations apply broadly and are based on resources and tools found in more general advocacy and legislative training.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

The AMSN Advocacy Toolkit was created for nurses at any stage of their career who are interested in developing advocacy knowledge, skills, and confidence. This may include:

- Nursing students
- Bedside nurses
- Charge nurses
- Nurse managers and leaders
- Nurse educators
- Nurses interested in leadership, policy, or advocacy

Using The AMSN Safe Staffing Toolkit

Step 1: Learn the Fundamentals

Begin by reviewing the sections describing advocacy, why it matters, and where advocacy occurs. These sections provide a foundation for understanding how advocacy can influence patient care, professional practice, workplace environments, and healthcare policy.

Step 2: Develop Advocacy Skills

The toolkit is organized around five key advocacy competencies:

- Understanding a Problem
- Framing a Problem
- Building and Maintaining Connections
- Asking for Action
- Following Through

These competencies can be applied in any advocacy setting, from communicating with a manager to meeting with elected officials.

Step 3: Practice Communication Techniques

The toolkit includes practical guidance for:

- Elevator pitches
- Email communication
- Phone conversations
- In-person meetings

Step 4: Apply the Tools

Use the examples, templates, and scenarios provided throughout the toolkit as a starting point for advocacy efforts. The examples are intended to illustrate how advocacy principles can be used in different situations and practice settings.

Important Considerations

Advocacy is most effective when it is grounded in facts, professional expertise, and a commitment to improving outcomes for patients, nurses, and healthcare organizations. When using this toolkit, nurses should:

- Gather objective information whenever possible.
- Follow organizational policies and procedures.
- Protect patient privacy and confidentiality.
- Focus on solutions as well as concerns.
- Communicate professionally, respectfully, and collaboratively.
- Use appropriate organizational channels when addressing workplace issues.

Practice Environment Considerations

Nurses practice in a variety of healthcare settings and organizational structures. Opportunities for advocacy may vary depending on organizational policies, governance structures, state regulations, and applicable labor agreements. Advocacy may occur through:

- Unit-based committees
- Shared governance structures
- Professional practice councils
- Quality and safety initiatives
- Leadership meetings
- Professional nursing organizations
- Community engagement activities
- Legislative and policy opportunities

Background

The Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses (AMSN) is the only professional organization directly representing the interests and needs of over 600,000 medical-surgical nurses across the US and Canada providing outstanding care to patients in every imaginable healthcare setting. Our members let us know that, while they have much to say, it can be difficult to know how, when and where to have their voice heard on topics that matter to them.

Nearly every professional nursing organization has resources and tools to aid their members in becoming more active with policy and legislative efforts, few address the more fundamental competency of developing a strong advocacy competency that becomes the foundation for a professional nursing career of increased influence.

This document serves as an introduction to the topic of nurse advocacy beyond the bedside with essential topics, tools, examples and scenarios that will aid any nursing professional—from student to CEO—to become more confident on how to be engaged and be heard.

While this toolkit prioritizes our medical-surgical nurse members, the principles and recommendations apply broadly and are based on resources and tools found in more general advocacy and legislative training.

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Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses