

Why Advocacy Matters

Advocacy begins with awareness, grows through engagement, and creates change through collective action. Because nurses witness healthcare challenges firsthand, they are uniquely positioned to identify barriers, elevate concerns, and speak out for meaningful change.

Many nurses hear “advocacy” and think:

- Congress
- Politics
- Lobbying

Instead, advocacy can occur anywhere where knowledge, passion and commitment combine. When advocacy happens, nurses improve:

- Patient outcomes
- Work environments
- Professional practice
- Population health

Advocacy Happens Everywhere



Decisions will always be made by people with position, power, and influence. But these people often don’t have the expertise needed to make the BEST decision.

How often could **YOU** be the person who helps others make the best decision for those involved?

Advocacy

While often discussed in terms of legislation, policies, and politics, **advocacy** refers to efforts to promote a position or to influence an outcome or decision.

Legislative and political advocacy are more specific efforts to influence opinion and decisions in formal groups like state and federal government.

A list of common terms and definitions related to advocacy can be found in the Appendix.

The Med-Surg Nurse's Unique Voice

One of the first hurdles to using your voice is convincing yourself that you have an opinion or experience that others will want to hear. Consider the following:

Medical-surgical nurses:

- Care for the broadest range of hospitalized patients
- See the largest slide of healthcare- admissions, transfers, placements, discharges
- Translate policy, practice regulatory, and financial decisions into care every day
- Are trusted communicators and translators of complex healthcare for patients and families

Most importantly, nurse voices carry credibility because they are grounded in a caring profession and lived experience, both theirs and their patients.

Advocacy competency can help you turn frontline experience into meaningful improvements.

Let's be honest, if this were easy, everyone would be doing it. While many nurses have strong feelings about specific topics and issues, they often cite a variety of barriers to action.

"I don't know enough"	"I'm not political."	"I'm just a bedside nurse."
"I'm afraid I'll say the wrong thing."	"I wouldn't know where to start."	"I don't have time for this stuff."

These concerns are completely understandable and are common for anyone who wonders how or why their voice should matter. The truth is every voice DOES matter, but the beauty of having an organization and a profession behind you is that you're not "just one voice," but **millions**.

The remainder of this toolkit will provide key knowledge, concepts, tips and tools to illustrate these points and support your efforts in being heard and having an impact on the issues you care most about.