

Iowa Organization of Nurse Leaders
Position Statement on Baccalaureate Preparation of Nurses
June 2010

Background:

The Iowa Organization of Nurse Leaders (IONL) promotes professional development, networking, research and innovation for the advancement of nursing leadership practice. IONL, through its Strategic Plan, encourages development of innovative care delivery methods.

Our mission is to represent and support nurse leaders in the state of Iowa as catalysts for innovation.

In 2008, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Advisory Council on Nursing Education & Practice urged states to raise nursing education to the baccalaureate level. These two national bodies oversee the nursing standards and guidelines of nursing education.

Recent research has demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between the levels of nursing education and improved patient outcomes. Aiken et al. (2003) found that all things being equal, the odds of 30-day mortality and failure to rescue was 19% lower in hospitals where 60% of the nurses had a baccalaureate degree. Tourangueau (2006) found a 10% increase in the proportion of baccalaureate prepared nurses was associated with nine fewer deaths per 1000 medical discharges. More recently, Blegen & Goode (2009) documented that higher rates of baccalaureate prepared nurses was associated with lower lengths of hospitalization, reductions in hospital acquired pressure ulcers, congestive failure mortality, and failure to rescue. Given this evidence-based research, it is imperative that as nurse leaders we create an environment that increases the percentage of baccalaureate prepared nurses in this state.

Position Statement:

The IONL, in support of evidence-based research and the position of the American Organization of Nurse Leaders, believes that the educational preparation of the nurse of the future be at the baccalaureate level. This educational preparation will prepare the nurse of the future to function as an equal partner, collaborator, and manager of the complex patient care journey, and will improve the clinical outcomes of Iowans.

The position of IONL recognizes that there will remain multiple educational levels for entry into practice; however, stresses the importance of continued education of nurses to move towards the baccalaureate level of education as the minimum standard for on-going practice.

Actions:

- Nurse leaders throughout the state need to establish dialogue within their health care system to promote baccalaureate education of their nurses and create an environment that supports nurses in advancing their education.
- The IONL will establish a task force and include key stakeholders in nursing, education, and licensure to discuss a plan to require baccalaureate preparation of nurses within ten years after initial licensure while maintaining the multiple entry points into the profession.