Leadership Development Action Plan

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April 20, 2025

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Effective nursing leadership relies on self-reflection, frequent assessment, experience, and knowledge acquisition to develop and hone competencies, including the skills and abilities to lead teams (Hughes et al., 2022). These competencies form a framework including five domains of business acumen and literacy, sound communication skills, healthcare climate expertise, and professionalism (American Organization for Nursing Leadership [AONL], 2022). The leader within is the pillar that guides these domains and includes a nurse leader's core beliefs and values, which encompass self-reflection, emotional intelligence, experience, and the acquisition of education and knowledge (Hughes et al., 2022).

The AONL's Nurse Manager Learning Domain Framework addresses three distinct learning domains: the Science, the Art, and the Leader Within, which encompass business management, relationship management and personal and professional growth (American Organization of Nurse Executives [AONE], 2015). Nursing leaders are accountable and responsible for patient satisfaction and safety outcomes, fostering a positive and safe work culture, fiscal stewardship, understanding today's healthcare environment, and much more. Furthermore, nursing leadership styles emblematic and inclusive of frequent and effective communication are associated with better outcomes such as nurse engagement and empowerment, a culture of professional growth, and innovative practice (Fowler et al., 2021). Promoting autonomy and transformation through effective communication and influencing techniques improves skill development and competencies, decision-making, overall work engagement, and motivation to excel in professional nursing practice (Alsadaan et al., 2023).

Through my journaling, leadership reading materials and self-assessments this semester, I have noticed gaps in my frequency and impact of staff communication, influencing my teams with shared goals and visions, and inattention to my own professional growth.

Goals to Improve my Leadership Practice

Foster a Culture of Frequent Feedback by Improving Communication Skills

My first leadership development action plan goal is to foster a culture of frequent feedback by improving communication skills. My specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goal is to provide 15 minutes of structured feedback for new employees at 30 days, 60 days and 90 days and once a month for all other employees, starting May 1st, 2025. Additionally, I will seek formal feedback once a month from both my direct supervisor, the Chief Nursing Officer, and the Chief Executive Officer. Providing frequent and constructive feedback reinforces positive behavior and addresses unacceptable behavior promptly, which gives an employee a fair and just opportunity to improve, an awareness of the behavior and potential opportunities, and helps align their goals with my own (Center for Creative Leadership [CCL], 2007). I will record positive feedback and recognize and appreciate individual employees in my weekly email to staff. I will continue to read leadership books and attend conferences that address honing communication skills, and I will request feedback from my direct supervisor, colleagues, and employees on ways I can improve in my communication with them. I can also practice my communication skills during daily rounding with patients and providers. Finding an offsite nurse mentor can assist in improving my communication skills and provide honest and constructive feedback as well. Major barriers to honing my communication skills and the provision of feedback include high job demands, overabundance of meetings and high nurse turnover rates. I am blocking chunks of time from my work calendar and consolidating meetings

to schedule time with my staff and rounding in the evenings to see patients and nurses on the night shifts. I am starting a book club with emerging nurse leaders to discuss leadership styles and communication skills as well. A lack of organizational support for potential nurse leaders includes inadequate organized training along with insufficient coaching and mentoring (Hawk, 2023). These emerging leaders would benefit from creating their own personal and professional development plans to better articulate their goals during formalized feedback sessions and identify their personality characteristics, and strengths and weaknesses as leaders (Embree, 2022).

I predict my staff engagement and satisfaction scores will increase this year due to more frequent feedback and communication, and I will gather and synthesize this data and share with my teams. By reviewing engagement survey scores with my direct reports, I am providing more feedback and transparency, building trust and celebrating collaboration, which invites more conversation through communication.

Encouraging Growth Mindset Thinking by Influencing My Teams

My second leadership development action plan goal is to encourage growth mindset thinking by influencing my teams. A growth mindset is a belief that intelligence, skill level, performance and ability can be developed through determination and effort, knowledge sharing, and consistency (Xiao et al., 2023). Nursing leaders with a growth mindset see each failure as an opportunity to learn and gain experience, develop and grow with their teams, and are willing to challenge themselves. Nurses with a growth mindset are more receptive to other individuals, have a more positive attitude, and report higher levels of well-being, job satisfaction and engagement (Xiao et al., 2023). I would like to improve my influence to gain more commitment

and engagement from my direct reports towards improving patient outcomes, organizational objectives and unit-specific goals.

My SMART goal is to organize and lead a workgroup of five nurses from the emergency department and medical surgical unit by June 30th, 2025, to brainstorm, collaborate and develop innovative ideas and goals for staff professional development and learning, and improve efficiencies within their departments. These workgroups will allow me to share my vision and that of the organization in a way that engages and influences my teams to start planning for the future and bettering our processes. I will develop specific agendas and goals through a robust planning process to aid in influencing my teams, building rapport and learning from shared experiences (CCL, 2007). I will also encourage my direct reports to borrow my leadership books to assist with their own professional development journeys. One way to increase engagement and influence is to encourage the pursuit of nursing certifications and additional education. Nurses who hold certifications report higher levels of engagement and work satisfaction (Wei et al., 2023). I will encourage my nurses to form study groups, and I will purchase nursing certification reference materials and study guides for staff to use for the attainment of knowledge and professional growth.

Through this workgroup, our patients, nursing leadership, and ancillary personnel will notice my interest in sharing our vision and influencing my teams by increased staff engagement, improved processes and better patient outcomes. I will need a dedicated space to gather participants and approval from executive leadership for non-clinical hours devoted to process improvement and collaboration. I have nursing colleagues who can assist with data collection and quality improvement project ideas, and nurses I am mentoring in need of educational clinical hours can provide assistance as well. Barriers include time restraints and a lack of clear goals and

outcomes. By developing a growth mindset and influencing my teams I would expect to see more nurses pursuing higher education and gaining nursing certifications, and improved patient quality metrics, by the end of 2025. I will use this data for our ongoing Magnet journey and to advocate for a more structured process to elevate nursing practice through growth mindset workgroups.

Exploring Career and Educational Opportunities

My third SMART goal relates to my professional development outside of my pursuit of an advanced nursing degree. While I possess several nursing certifications, I would like to become a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) within one year. I would also like to explore other advanced nursing career options outside of my current healthcare organization, including executive leadership and academia, for the next eighteen months. I am a member of the ACHE and have sought out two current FACHE fellows to potentially advocate for my acceptance, pursuant of my application submission next year. My direct supervisor and executive leadership team would certainly notice my acquisition of this highly regarded credential. The required in-person and online education credits might aid in my growth and development as a leader, such that my colleagues and staff might notice. I would use this credential to further my own career aspirations and to become a more effective and collaborative leader. I have mapped out a timeline to complete all the requirements of the application and have researched available resources to aid in my journey. Barriers include procrastination and high job, family and school demands which may impede travel and study time. If I obtain this credential, then I wish to mentor other nursing leaders to improve leadership skills and help with professional growth and development.

With my impending graduation from the Doctoral of Nursing Practice (DNP) in Health Systems Leadership in December 2025, I envision growing in my profession and pursuing executive leadership roles or academic positions. I am content and still learning in my director-level position and I require several more years in this role to feel confident and competent at an advanced or expert level. However, I am excited to use my doctoral degree in ways beyond my current position. I plan to peruse Linkedin and other professional career sites to assess the nursing executive and academia hiring climate and to gain insight and coaching through mentorship and professional networking. I will continue to read leadership materials and research related to nursing leadership styles to hone my skills and close gaps I have noticed through leadership exercises, including self-reflections and assessments. While I do not plan to leave my current position, I am interested in expanding my knowledge and experience and assessing my options for career advancement.

My priority leadership development action plan goals include fostering a culture of frequent feedback by improving communication skills, encouraging growth mindset thinking by influencing my teams and pursuing the FACHE credential within the year. Frequent and structured feedback and team development through workgroups will help me improve engagement and empowerment in my nurses, foster a climate of shared decision-making, goals and visions, and elevate my leadership effectiveness and job fulfillment. Self-assessment allowed me to identify leadership development gaps through an organized process. These gaps include clear, often and timely communication to my direct reports and a lack of influential leadership to improve patient outcomes, and patient and nurse satisfaction.

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