

NANN Advocacy Agenda (2022)

The National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN) is dedicated to advocating at the local, state, and federal level for optimized care and positive health outcomes for neonates and their families. As the leader in neonatal nursing, NANN seeks to support and enhance legislation that improves the lives of the most vulnerable population. NANN advocates for the entire nursing community through policy, research, education, expansion of access to healthcare facilities and providers, and supports federal funding directly connected to meeting the most pressing needs of the nursing profession and the patients and families that we serve.

Disparities Within Neonatal Care

There are numerous studies demonstrating racial and ethnic health disparities in preterm birth, NICU outcomes, and infant mortality. Three contributors to health disparities have been described: increased risk for pre-term birth, lower quality of care, and socioeconomic disadvantages. NANN strongly believes that all infants, regardless of race, parental economic or educational status, or geographic area should receive equitable, quality healthcare.

COVID-19 Impact on Patients and Nurses

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on patients and frontline providers has been tremendous. Many studies document the overall health impact of the pandemic, inclusive of mental, physical, and emotional consequences on patients and nurses. Depression, anxiety, and fear were common trends manifesting into physical ailments. NANN strongly believes in the holistic wellbeing of the nurse and patient and supports measures to improve and maintain good health.

Mental Health of NICU Families

NANN firmly believes in supporting the mental health of NICU families. Taking time for oneself as a NICU parent, partner, or family member with the birth of an infant that results in an unexpected NICU stay is a challenge. NANN acknowledges the stress and emotions required to keep life normal while bonding and welcoming a new infant into the family. NANN recognizes that maintaining strong physical, emotional, and brain health of the family can improve the outcomes of the patient within the NICU and in the long-term. Neonatal nurses should feel empowered to advocate and care for their patients and their families. NANN supports research, policy and program development that furthers the access and care that NICU families need while they adapt to their new life both in and out of the NICU.

Nursing Workforce Development, Recruitment, and Mental Health Support of Nurses

NANN believes in caring for nurses through continued professional development, support for nursing recruitment initiatives, expanding access to mental health resources, and continued conversation to decrease any stigma for healthcare workers seeking treatment for mental health. Acknowledging the



substantial number of nurses exiting the profession in these unprecedented times is vital, and the development of the current and future nursing workforce is critical to the health of our country. Through nurse engagement and continuing education, NANN supports both the growth of the nursing community and the importance of retaining the experience and professionalism within the current workforce. During these unprecedented times, there is even more reason to advocate for mental health care resources and to emphasize erasing any stigma associated with mental health issues. Caring for others is at the heart of all nurses, and NANN supports the well-being of all neonatal nurses.

Environmental Justice and Climate Impacts

The global impact of climate change and unhealthy environmental impacts on our planet has been immense. Our patients, our local and global communities, and our practice itself have been directly impacted by unhealthy air quality, unhealthy water quality, sanitation/waste pollution, toxic chemicals, food pesticides, and other issues of toxicity. Additionally recent research indicates the introduction of microplastics starts in the womb, directly affecting our youngest patients. NANN believes that a healthy environment is critical to the development of our patients. Advocacy is a nursing role and as such, we are charged with raising awareness and providing education on the environmental health threats that impact our patients and their mothers. In addition, we are charged with acting to ameliorate the impact of such threats.

Paid Family Leave

Paid family leave (PFL) establishes a safety net for working individuals when medical needs arise. PFL gives people the ability to earn all or a portion of their income, while they take time away from work to care for themselves or a family member due to health needs. Paid family leave can include time to address a serious medical condition or a significant health event such as pregnancy and the care of a newborn. Paid family leave allows time away from work and opportunities to refresh physical and mental health. NANN believes that providing financial support through paid leave is necessary for healthier pregnancies, improves birth outcomes, increases successful driven provision of human milk, and improves physical and mental health in the postpartum period for both parents and infants.

Nutrition and Direct Provision of Human Milk

NANN believes that the direct provision of human milk can help establish the relationship between an infant and its nursing parent. The nutrition provided by human milk (direct, expressed or donor) plays an important role in the healthy development of the infant, with studies showing that the direct provision of human milk is the best option for infant nutrition. NANN supports access to education on the provision of human milk (direct, expressed or donor) as well as legislation that protects parents right to direct feed in public and assure breaks to express milk while at work, thereby ensuring optimal nutritional and emotional health of infants.

References for the studies mentioned in the Advocacy Agenda are available upon request.

