



The ABN: Leading Change for Alabama Healthcare

Peggy Sellers Benson, MSN, RN, MSHA, NE-BC
ABN Executive Officer

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Alabama and the nation have seen a new focus on access to high-quality care for all patients. This is a challenge with many facets and no easy solutions, but policy makers, employers, educators, and other stakeholders have searched diligently for potential answers to the largest issue facing healthcare today - the continuing shortage of healthcare providers, especially nurses, in the workforce. And the ABN has been at the forefront of our state's efforts.

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Contact Us:

Alabama Board of Nursing
P.O. Box 303900
Montgomery, AL 36130-3900

(800) 656-5318
abn@abn.alabama.gov

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@albonursing



Leading Change

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While the problem persists, the Board of Nursing is proud of its efforts to reduce regulatory barriers, expand opportunities, and above all, promote and ensure access to care for all Alabamians. Below is a brief list of some of our Board's accomplishments since 2020.

- Provided a framework for nursing programs to continue robust clinical education components despite limited access to healthcare facilities. This allowed programs confronted by restricted access to clinical sites and social distancing protocols to develop innovative approaches to satisfying their instructional objectives.
- Successfully petitioned the Governor's office to expand APRN practice and allow CRNAs to be utilized outside of the perioperative area (e.g. - EDs and ICUs), as well as to expand FTE requirements and allow CRNPs to practice under the Chief Medical Officer in healthcare facilities.
- Expanded the use of Standardized Procedures (SPs) for APRNs and disseminated ABN-produced Just in Time Training (JITT) videos instructing CNOs/employers on expansion of the use of SPs for APRNs in various settings and circumstances.
- Successfully advocated for expanded legislative authority and implemented rules establishing Medication Assistant, Certified (MAC) roles practicing under permits issued by the ABN. These permits require standardized education through the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and require national certification (through the MACE exam).
- Proactively developed a three-tier plan to ensure continuity of agency operations to allow Board staff to work remotely and continue the licensing process. This was particularly helpful during the height of the COVID-19 crisis, when social distancing and other protocols rendered in-person agency staffing impossible. However, the structure developed by the ABN has proven invaluable under various other challenges since that time and will continue to provide an avenue for responding to future critical situations.
- Created employer job and scholarship boards through the ABN Center for Nursing Excellence webpage to allow nurses to explore opportunities for employment and professional growth.





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- Implemented rules establishing Nursing Student/Graduate Aide roles to assist nurses at the bedside and expand opportunities for students and applicants who have not yet passed the NCLEX national nursing licensure exam to develop, improve, and apply critical thinking skills. Graduate Aides may continue to practice in the role indefinitely, pending passage of NCLEX.
- Successfully advocated for expanded legislative authority and implemented rules establishing Student Nurse Apprentice (SNA) roles practicing under permits issued by the ABN. Similar to the Nursing Student/Graduate Aide role but subject to more expansive and progressive practice rules, SNAs are permitted to work for pay in Alabama facilities, while applying a portion of their work time to satisfy the clinical instruction requirements of their education programs. The ultimate goal of this increasingly popular program is to improve the skills and quality of patient care provided by new graduate nurses.
- Developed rules allowing nursing education programs to establish degree completion programs allowing students who failed to complete their initial education programs to successfully complete a new program without restarting from the beginning.
- Fast tracked approval of 11 stand-alone LPN programs, allowing existing Alabama education institutions to expand program options for aspiring students and boost Alabama's nursing population.
- Expanded LPN practice to allow assistance with blood transfusions, completion of a comprehensive patient assessment with a standardized procedure, and expanded participation in care planning for stable or predictable patients.
- Implemented emergency rules for APRN practice under disaster or emergency conditions; the substance of these rules was incorporated in the most recent emergency proclamation from the Governor.
- Expanded CE credits eligible to satisfy the required 24 hours required biennially for licensure and renewal.
- Developed, communicated, and disseminated CNO/Employer strategies for recruitment and retention of Alabama nurses.





Leading Change

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- Provided numerous presentations across the state and nationally related to the Nurse Licensure Compact, workforce issues, leadership development, nursing practice, nursing education, public policy, Board operations and regulation, discipline and legal issues, mental health and wellness, and substance abuse through the ABN Speakers Bureau.

As I mentioned previously, there is still much work to be done, but we are committed to ensuring that Alabama is ready and able to meet not only the challenges we see today, but also the new and emerging ones that no doubt will come in the future.

Substance Abuse Remains a Problem in Healthcare

Since the pandemic began, the Board of Nursing has continued to receive increasing reports of substance abuse in healthcare. Providers are under stress and many seek to escape their problems by turning to drugs and alcohol. As nurses, we have a duty to ensure that we and our coworkers are able to provide care that meets the high standards our honored profession has always demanded. It is our responsibility to pay attention to ourselves, our employees, and our peers. Pay attention to those around you; if you see someone who is showing signs of substance abuse, please help them help themselves. Patients are depending on all of us.

ABN Speaker Bureau Available for Live and Virtual Presentations

The Alabama Board of Nursing maintains an active and engaged Speaker Bureau to ensure that licensees and the public are informed on a variety of issues, including practice, discipline, regulation, substance use disorders and interventions, and mental health and wellness among healthcare workers. Our professional staff will be happy to arrange a presentation for your facility, education program, or organization. We maintain pre-prepared presentations, but may be able to address a specific issue or concern, provided adequate lead time for research and approval. For further information or to request a presentation, please visit the [Speaker Bureau](#) on the ABN website.



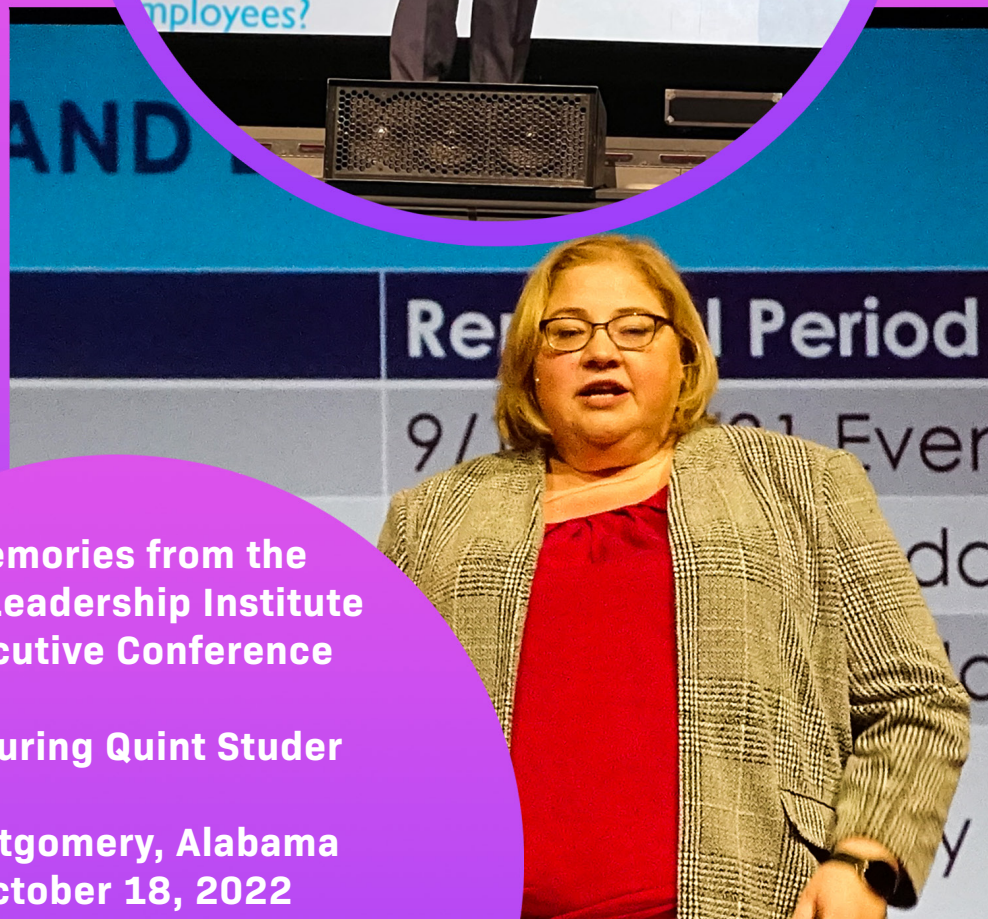
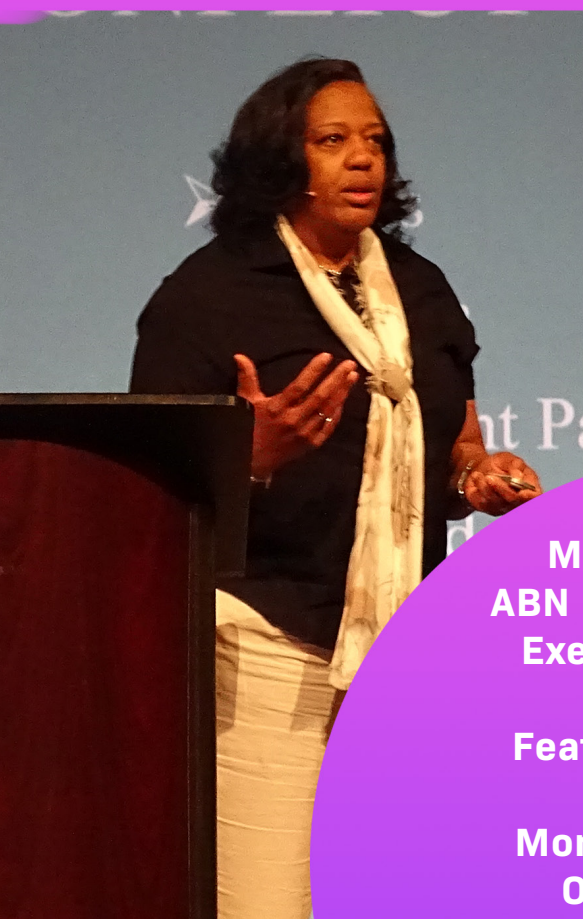


Congratulations to these nurses who have completed the Individual Tier of the ABN Leadership Institute

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**Memories from the
ABN Leadership Institute
Executive Conference**

Featuring Quint Studer

**Montgomery, Alabama
October 18, 2022**



Start Your Leadership Journey Today

Congratulations to the nurses who have completed the Individual Tier of the ABN Leadership Institute. If you would like to join the dozens of nurses who are well on their way to developing top-notch leadership skills for personal development as a professional, improvement of the patient care team, and dedication to the organization's mission in providing safe, high-quality patient care, start now. If you have attended one of the ABN's Conferences held this year, you may still complete the online courses and Applied Leadership Activity for either the Individual or Team Tier to complete that portion of the curriculum.

Stay tuned for more leadership development and training provided by the ABN in 2023! Don't get left out – start your leadership journey today!

[ABN Leadership Institute Instructions](#)

[Enroll in the Individual Tier](#)

[Enroll in the Team Tier](#)

Human Trafficking CE Courses

The ABN recently posted a human trafficking webinar that was hosted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama. This webinar has been made into a three-part module of online CE courses for nurses, which is available free of charge inside [My Profile](#). Remember – it doesn't matter if you have already renewed your license, you can still take these courses for CE that will apply to your next renewal. The old days of waiting to earn CE after renewal are gone – you can now earn CE toward your next renewal the very next day after you renew. So, don't delay, and take these courses today because you never know who you may encounter or whose life you may help save.

Module 1: Types of Human Trafficking – Sex and Labor

Module 2: Healthcare Management

Module 3: Alabama Human Trafficking Laws





Mental Wellness in Nursing: Developing Resiliency

Abby Migliore, MSN, MBA, RN

Many people look at mental wellness as the absence of mental illness. We often do not make allowances for looking at mental wellness as a continuum or reassessing how we are doing when things in our lives change.

How many times have you heard nurses become frustrated when something happens in their lives just when they felt like they were doing well? When someone is struggling to cope or even turning to negative coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, he or she may talk about a time or situation that was difficult to deal with. Often, you will hear things like *“I was doing well until...”* or *“I did not even drink until...”* It is important to look not only at how we are coping with current situations but also at how prepared we are for what may occur in the future. How mentally well we identify ourselves to be can change depending on what is happening in our lives at any given time.

Though it was certainly not a new idea, resiliency, or helping to develop a more resilient workforce, is an increasingly popular topic in healthcare post-COVID. **Resiliency can be defined as the capability of a person to positively adapt to traumatic or negative experiences.** What resources and coping techniques does an individual or organization have to positively deal with negative situations or events?

This certainly does not mean the person will not feel stress or difficult emotions; the important thing is how the person or organization is able to recover from these difficult or traumatic situations. We may all be able to think about times in our lives when something happened that we had a difficult time managing or even whether we were going to be able to cope with what occurred. Resiliency relates to both the individual (looking at how resilient we are personally) and the organization (how resilient our workforce is). Resiliency has been studied for many years by facilities to decrease burnout rates, decrease stress, and help increase retention of the workforce.

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Developing Resiliency

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How do we help ourselves and others become more resilient? Look at ways to debrief or use stress management techniques whenever you are able. The organization may want to look at putting in place resources or education about what can be done when staff encounter a difficult situation.

Foster an environment that is conducive to mental health and wellness in ourselves and those around us. It is important that we take steps to support ourselves and each other not only for our own wellbeing but also to ensure that we are prepared to provide excellent and safe care to patients across Alabama every day.

You may find the following resources helpful:

[Joy In Work Toolkit](#)

[The Workforce Resilience Enhancement Project](#)

[Center for Workforce Mental Health](#)

[Well-being Ambassador Program](#)

ALABAMA BOARD OF NURSING

**770 Washington Avenue, Suite 250
Montgomery, Alabama 36104
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 303900
Montgomery, AL 36130-3900
334.293.5200 • 800.656.5318
fax: 334.293.5201**

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ATTENTION: ALABAMA SSL RNs

Your Alabama single state RN license
will lapse if you have not completed
renewal **before 4:30pm on December 31st!**

- Ensure that you have enough CE:
Check your CE Record at [My Profile](#)

Alabama patients are counting on you.

Renew ASAP.

