



## **ASTDN Position Statement on The Future of Nursing Report March 2011**

### **Background:**

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine released its report entitled, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. This report, prepared by an independent body chaired by Dr. Donna Shalala, President of the University of Miami, includes recommendations for entities such as Congress, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, the Federal Trade Commission, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, State legislatures, private foundations, health care organizations, and academic institutions about changes that are needed to make it possible for the largest single group of health professionals – nurses – to play an important and necessary role in health care reform. The report emphasizes that if we are to end up with both better health as a nation and a better health care system, the involvement of registered nurses is essential.

Advancing health, the last two words in the report's title, is consistent with the goals of the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing (ASTDN) and with the focus of public health nursing across the nation. Advancing health must be the primary focus of activities related to implementation of the recommendations made in the IOM report in order to ensure that all Americans live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives.

### **Alignment with ASTDN and Public Health Nursing:**

The recommendations in the report align with ASTDN priorities in several ways.

**Recommendation 4 – Increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80% by 2020:** Public health nurses and ASTDN members as leaders in public health nursing have long advocated that a baccalaureate degree in nursing should be the minimum preparation for public health nursing practice. However, because the pool of baccalaureate-prepared nurses is limited or because salaries in governmental agencies tend to lag behind those of private non-profit and for-profit agencies, many states have been unable to achieve this in practice. If 80% of the nursing workforce were educationally prepared at the baccalaureate level, it would be much easier for states to adopt and comply with this standard.

### **Recommendation 7– Prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health:**

ASTDN has advocated for many years the importance of involving public health nursing leaders in decision-making regarding care/services delivered by public health agencies. In addition, ASTDN continues to target leadership development for its members to prepare them for future leadership roles and enhance their skills, knowledge and abilities for current and future challenges.

Other recommendations included in the report will benefit public health nursing overall.

**Recommendation 1 – Remove scope of practice barriers:** In states where the scope of practice is limited for advanced practice registered nurses, removing the limitations would have a positive impact on the ability to deliver services that protect the public's health ( treatment for tuberculosis and STDs) When the scope of practice for the RN is unrestricted by nurse practice acts and employers, public health nurses can be effectively used to provide initial screening and assessments of clients in order to identify risk factors, need for referrals, etc. an approach would be more cost effective.

**Recommendation 2 – Expand opportunities for nurses to lead and diffuse collaborative improvement efforts:** Public health nurses already contribute and should be used more widely to play a key role in the collaborative efforts required to address the major and extremely complex health issues affecting their communities. Obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases, as well as vaccine preventable diseases, environmental concerns and other issues related to the health of the population, are examples of areas where public health nurses should be involved in policy setting and program development.

**Recommendation 3 – Implement nurse residency programs:** The transition to public health nursing practice, whether from an academic setting for a new graduate or from another practice setting, is challenging because of the shift in focus from an individual patient to the population at large. Residency programs which provide support for the transitioning nurse could have a significant impact on retention of nurses in the public health nursing workforce by providing opportunities to gain the competencies needed to function effectively in this new role.

**Recommendation 5 – Double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020:** In order to create an adequately prepared public health nursing workforce, it is critical to have nursing faculty prepared at the doctoral level in public health. These academic and practice leaders, in turn, will be crucial to the educational preparation to assist future nurses to understand and implement the population-focused role.

**Recommendation 6 – Ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning:** Because public health nurses are focused on the health of the population, the concentration of their activities is constantly changing. The attention to communicable diseases remains constant; however, the diseases of interest have changed over the last few years, including H1N1, the recent pertussis epidemic, the rise of chronic diseases, and other emerging infections. The expectations also include a greater emphasis on emergency preparedness and response. Having mechanisms in place to assure that

public health nurses are able to access both masters and doctoral education that includes population health concepts and principles, as well as appropriate and affordable continuing education will allow public health nurses to remain current and to implement best practices which is essential to protecting the health of the population.

**Position:**

**ASTDN endorses the recommendations in The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health and encourage all of its members to become actively engaged in the implementation of the Action Plan, including being actively involved in existing or developing Regional Action Coalitions in their states.**