Lateral violence and conflict resolution training are only as effective as there is buy in from leadership from practice or academia. Training to develop these competencies develops only over time and cannot be mastered by attending one class. Leadership commitment is essential for the long term investment to help achieve positive work cultures.

A key to effective conflict and lateral violence training programs is assisting participants to develop personal insight into their own behaviors. It also involves helping participants to change and develop new more effective behaviors. Core content includes development of effective communication, conflict management and resolution strategies to help counteract and minimize conflict and violence in the workplace. Participants need to practice new behaviors and strategies and master new skills through small groups or role play. Some examples include: “Can We Talk, the board game, developed by Upstate AHEC utilizing cognitive rehearsal that allows participants to practice new communication skills for confronting lateral violence behavior in non-threatening environment; and watching videos featuring scenarios defining lateral violence created by the 2007-2008 Amy V. Cockcroft nurse fellows (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBCRBaLHR1k&feature=related).

The Center for Nursing Leadership (CNL) found personal mastery of conflict resolution and lateral violence preventive strategies is required if leaders are to be effective in their roles. Fifteen years of feedback from the Amy V. Cockcroft Executive Leadership Development Program and 5 years from the “Leading from the Middle” middle management leadership program clearly illustrated the need. The participants of both programs reported countless examples of conflict among staff members that occupied up to 90% of their work day and often resulted in some form of lateral violence. Upstate AHEC, doing training with their HRSA Grant, identified similar findings. The need is further validated by the IOM Studies, Patient Safety Movement, IHI Five million lives campaign, “Silence Kills” research and the 2009 Joint Commission Standards.

Long term commitment to Stopping Lateral Violence requires leadership. Leaders please help “Stop the Bullying and Create a Positive Work Culture. Join us at the Mary Ann Parsons Conference February 12, 2010. There will be a special session for the nurse leaders in practice and academia with Dr. Judith Vessey, the conference key note speaker. We hope to see you there.