



VALUE STATEMENT: NURSING PRACTICE AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Policy Position | 2026-2027 Policy Council

BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes have affected nearly 3 billion people worldwide. Nurses have played a vital role in protecting public health during and after these events, as well as during public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing care, education, and support to affected communities.

Nursing professionals should be involved in developing and implementing disaster risk reduction strategies at local, national, and global levels. Nurses are valuable in all phases of disaster management because of their clinical expertise, understanding of vulnerable populations, and knowledge of community resources. Their skills enable them to coordinate across-healthcare, social services, government agencies, and community organizations to support effective disaster prevention, response, and recovery.¹

DISASTER RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

The frequency of and severity of disasters has increasingly led national nursing organizations to prioritize disaster response as a focus of nursing practice and education

¹ Rowaida Al-Maatiah, et. al., “Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing,” International Council of Nurses (2019), available at: https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/ICN_Disaster-Comp-Report_WEB.pdf; see also David Stewart, Kristine Gebbie, Alison Hutton, “Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing: Competencies for Nurses Involved in Emergency Medical Teams (Level III),” International Council of Nurses (2022), available at: https://www.icn.ch/system/files/documents/2022-10/ICN_2022_Disaster-Comp-Report_EN_WEB_0.pdf.

and recently led the National League for Nursing to publish a vision statement titled Disaster Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

The publication provides a strategic framework for nursing schools and healthcare partners to embed disaster nursing education as a core, ongoing component of nursing training. The vision statement's call to action advocates for aligning educational standards, resources, and policy efforts to strengthen and sustain a nursing workforce that is prepared to effectively respond to disasters.²

The Texas Nurses Association echoes this call to increase nursing education in disaster preparedness and practical preparation for disaster response. When the state or federal government engages in disaster preparation and response, nurses should be included to maximize lifesaving efforts and ensure an orderly, strategic response.

CONCLUSION

The Texas Nurses Association encourages nurses to consider their unique abilities to assist in disaster response, their ethical obligations to those affected by disasters, and to develop competencies prior to a local or nearby disaster so they can assist those affected by disaster events when they occur. The Texas Nurses Association also encourages nurses to register with the Texas Disaster Volunteer Registry, to assist with organized disaster response, and encourages nurses to be involved in disaster preparedness and preparation.

² L. MacIntyre, et al., "NLN Vision Statement: Disaster Mitigation, Preparedness, Response & Recovery," National League for Nursing (2026), available at: https://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/nln-disaster-vision-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6715683d_1..

APPENDIX: ETHICAL PRINCIPALS AND COMPETENCIES

Code of Ethics for Nurses, Duty to Care: nurses have a commitment to human life, ensuring equitable distribution of medical countermeasures, triage, and supportive resources during a crisis.³

ICN Emergency Preparedness Competencies:

Aligned with the WHO Classification and Minimum Standards for Emergency Medical Teams, these competencies specify the minimum standards nurses should meet when deployed as part of a coordinated disaster response effort.

These competencies define what nurses should be capable of doing in particular circumstances, based on their professional knowledge and experience and are established on eight domains.

The **Level 1** competencies are for all registered nurses, including staff nurses in hospitals, clinics and health centers, and all nurse educators.

The **Level 2** competencies are for any nurse who has achieved the level 1 competencies and is or aspires to be a designated disaster responder within an institution, organization or system.

The **Level 3** competency builds upon completion of basic nursing education (Level I) and institutional disaster preparedness training (Level II), preparing nurses who meet national or international standards for direct deployment to complex disaster and crisis settings.

8 Competency Domains:

- **Preparation and planning** - actions taken apart from any specific emergency to increase readiness and confidence in actions to be taken during an event
- **Communication** - approaches to conveying essential information within one's place of work or emergency assignment and documenting decisions made
- **Incident management systems** - the structure of disaster/emergency response required by countries/state or territories, organizations/institutions and actions to make them effective

³ American Nurses Association, "Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements," (2025), available at: <https://codeofethics.ana.org/home>.

- **Safety and security** - assuring that nurses, their colleagues and patients do not add to the burden of response by unsafe practices
- **Assessment** - gathering data about assigned patients/families/communities on which to base subsequent nursing actions
- **Intervention** - clinical or other actions taken in response to assessment of patients/families/communities within the incident management of the disaster event
- **Recovery** - any steps taken to facilitate resumption of pre-event individual/family/community/organization functioning or moving it to a higher level
- **Law and ethics** - the legal and ethical framework for disaster/emergency nursing

Proactive Population Advocacy: prioritizing and modifying care models to safely accommodate high-risk, high vulnerability populations including people with disabilities. These groups face unique risks and nursing, other healthcare professionals, and advocacy groups must identify effective strategies to reduce those risks and prevent harm.⁴

Systemic Collaboration: active integration into multidisciplinary networks, health security strategies, and regional emergency management infrastructure.⁵

⁴ Brandon Gray, et. al., "A proactive approach: Examples for integrating disaster risk reduction and mental health and psychosocial support programming," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* (2021), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102051>.

⁵ Sharah AlOtaibi, et. al., "Enhancing Nurses' Disaster Management and Preparedness: Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Online Educational Program Through a Quasi-Experimental Study," *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy* (2024), available at: <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S446704>.