



ON PURPOSE

FY26 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
of CRITICAL-CARE NURSES

A MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT

Our Conversations.

When I look back on this year,
I don't think first about the
milestones or accomplishments.
I think about the *conversations*.

Throughout the year, nurses shared stories about the realities of caring for patients, supporting one another, stepping into leadership roles and finding new ways to keep growing in a profession that never stands still. While every conversation was different, many of them pointed to the same themes.

These ideas shaped AACN's work throughout the year. They influenced the resources we developed, the research we supported, the educational opportunities we created and the ways we continued advocating for nurses and the patients they serve.

The pages that follow tell the story of that work but more importantly, they reflect the people behind it. Every program, initiative and milestone exists because nurses continue to challenge us to think differently, improve together and build a stronger future for acute and critical care nursing.

Thank you for the work you do every day and for allowing AACN to be part of your professional journey.

With deep appreciation,

REBEKAH MARSH

President, 2025–2026

This year reinforced
four important truths.

Healthy work environments are shaped by people.

Healthy work environments aren't created by policies alone. They are shaped by people who choose to listen, support one another and create cultures where everyone feels safe to learn and speak up.

Confidence grows over time.

No one becomes an experienced nurse overnight. Confidence grows over time, often in ways that are hard to recognize until you look back. It's found in the accumulation of small moments that gradually change how nurses see themselves and what they know they're capable of.

Community matters.

Ask someone who's been involved with AACN for twenty years how they got started and there's a good chance they'll tell you about another person before they mention a program. Whether through a local chapter, a conference conversation, an online discussion or a colleague who extends an invitation, nurses continue to remind us that meaningful connections strengthen both individuals and the profession.

Progress begins with listening.

And maybe most importantly, progress begins with listening. The best ideas rarely come from one person or one organization. They emerge from the experiences, questions and perspectives shared by nurses every day.

*“Extraordinary things
happen when we listen
to each other.”*

At a Glance

A year of people, progress and purpose.

Together, we are creating a stronger future for acute and critical care nursing. These numbers reflect the reach of our community and the impact we make when nurses come together.



Behind every number is a nurse, a connection and a story of impact.



136,000

MEMBERS

A growing community of nurses, united by a shared commitment to exceptional care.



23,343

CERTIFICATIONS EARNED

Nurses advancing their knowledge, skills and impact across the profession.



576

BEACON UNITS

Organizations creating healthier work environments where nurses and patients thrive.



170

CHAPTERS

Local communities making a difference in every region across the United States.



111

EDUCATIONAL HOURS

Learning opportunities to support nurses at every stage of their careers



1,300

VOLUNTEERS

Nurses sharing their time, experience and perspective to help shape AACN and strengthen the profession.



967

MICROCREDENTIALS AWARDED

Focused learning that helps nurses build and demonstrate knowledge in specialized areas of care.



8,333

NTI ATTENDEES

Nurses coming together to learn, connect and share ideas that strengthen practice.



43

ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Speaking up on issues that affect nurses, patients and the future of acute and critical care.

Creating Places Where Nurses Thrive

Healthy work environments are often discussed in terms of staffing, policies and processes.

While important, they don’t tell the whole story. The experiences that stay with nurses are usually much more personal. A leader who takes time to listen. A teammate who steps in without being asked. A workplace where questions are welcomed and speaking up is expected. *These moments shape culture as much as any policy ever could.*

Listening to Nurses



Creating healthier work environments starts with understanding what nurses are experiencing today. For more than two decades, AACN has worked alongside nurses and healthcare organizations to better understand what creates healthy work environments and how to build them. That work continued this year through research, updated standards, practical tools and national collaboration, all with the goal of helping organizations create environments where nurses can thrive and patients receive the highest quality care.

NEARLY

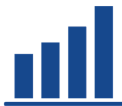
12,000

nurses participated in AACN’s sixth Healthy Work Environment National Survey, sharing their perspectives on workplace culture, leadership, communication, staffing and collaboration.



HWE Assessment Tool

Organizations continued using the Healthy Work Environment Assessment Tool (HWEAT) to evaluate workplace culture, measure progress and identify opportunities for improvement. 67,538 HWEAT surveys were completed in FY26, a 64% increase from the prior year.



Workplace Culture Research

Ongoing workplace culture research provides insights that continue to shape AACN’S priorities and identify where nurses need the greatest support.



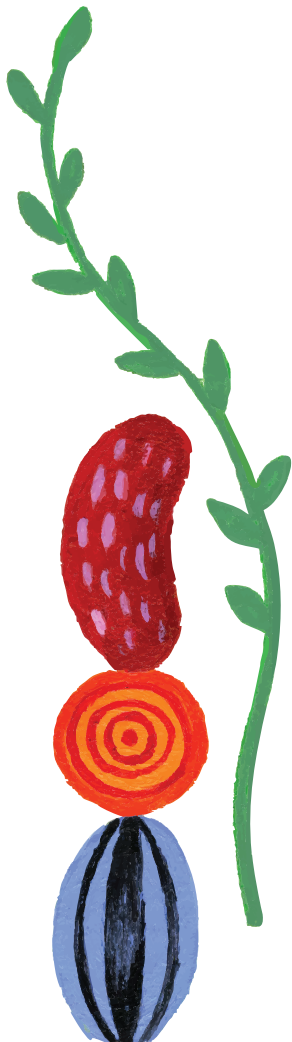
AACN Advocacy: Turning Insights Into Action

Listening is only the first step. Creating healthier workplaces requires practical tools that organizations can put into action. This year, AACN began work on the third edition of the Healthy Work Environment Standards while expanding implementation resources designed to help leaders strengthen communication, collaboration and workplace culture. Additional work on staffing standards and unit-based practice resources provides organizations with practical guidance for creating environments where nurses and patients can thrive.

The Healthy Work Environment National Collaborative brought healthcare organizations together from across the nation to exchange ideas and share practical approaches to implementing the HWE Standards to impact patient, healthcare team, and organizational outcomes.

More Progress This Year

- Pediatric Staffing Standards Published
- Workplace Violence Prevention Resources Curated
- Future of Nursing Campaign Participation



Recognizing What Healthy Work Environments Make Possible



The Beacon Award for Excellence recognizes hospital units that put evidence-based practices into action to improve patient outcomes, strengthen the nursing workforce and create healthier work environments. Through the assessment process, units also gain feedback and benchmark data that can help identify where they are doing well and where there are opportunities to improve.

576

HOSPITAL UNITS

A record year, across more than 300 health systems, a 90% increase from the previous year.

35,463

NURSES

work within the units recognized with a Beacon Award in 2025, representing a powerful reach across the profession.

Geographic and Global Reach

Honored units spanned 43 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, with international representation from three health facilities in Saudi Arabia.

THREE AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

-  **Patient Outcomes**
Improving care through measurable results.
-  **Work Environment**
Creating conditions where nurses can thrive.
-  **Nursing Workforce**
Building and sustaining a strong nursing team.

Participating units received actionable benchmark data that allows them to compare their performance with national peers and identify opportunities to continue improving.

New This Year

For the first time, units could also participate in individual assessment modules, providing another way to understand their performance and identify opportunities for improvement.

89

GOLD UNITS

Demonstrated sustained excellence and outcomes that exceeded national benchmarks.

427

SILVER UNITS

Recognized for continual improvement and effective systems for delivering care.

60

BRONZE UNITS

Awarded for establishing and integrating unit-based performance criteria to improve outcomes.





Growing Nurses at Every Stage

Nurses never stop learning and neither do we.

Ask nurses when they first felt confident in their practice and many won't point to a single moment. More often, they'll describe a series of experiences that gradually changed the way they saw themselves. A difficult patient. A mentor who offered encouragement. A certification they weren't sure they were ready for. A conversation that challenged them to think differently.

Professional growth rarely follows a straight path. It develops through experience, curiosity and a commitment to keep learning. AACN supports that growth in many ways, from certification and continuing education to scholarships, leadership development and educational programs that help nurses continue building their knowledge and confidence throughout their careers.

Investing in nurses today builds a healthier tomorrow.

Certification and Microcredentials

For many nurses, certification represents more than passing an exam. It's a milestone that reflects experience and a commitment to clinical excellence. Throughout the year, AACN continued supporting nurses preparing for certification with study resources and practice exams, while offering more microcredentials and professional development opportunities that build confidence at every stage of a nurse's career.

Certifications Earned

Total: 23, 343

CCRN Adult	15,107
CCRN Neonatal	294
CCRN Pediatric	1,260
PCCN	2,790
CMC	1,611
CSC	987
ACNPC-AG	1,152
ACCNS-AG	101
ACCNS-N	16
ACCNS-P	25

Microcredentials Awarded

Total: 967

COVID-19	103
ECMO	359
Sepsis	444
ARDS	61

Continuing Education

Learning doesn't stop after orientation or certification. Healthcare is constantly evolving and nurses continue learning throughout their careers to keep pace with new evidence, technology and best practices.

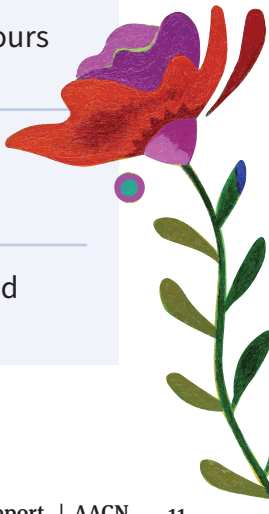
AACN provided continuing education through conferences, webinars, peer-reviewed journals, online courses and on-demand learning designed to meet nurses where they are and support lifelong professional growth.

CE CENTER BY THE NUMBERS

926	Continuing Education Hours Offered
1.34m	Participants Awarded CE
1.6m	Total Awarded Hours

COURSEWARE BY THE NUMBERS

289	Continuing Education Hours Offered
558,764	Participants Awarded CE
613,724	Total Awarded Hours



NTI: A Shared Commitment to Learning

Education has always been at the heart of NTI. Thousands of nurses come together each year to hear new ideas, explore emerging evidence, strengthen clinical knowledge and learn from experts and one another.

For some attendees, NTI also represents an investment in their future through scholarships and educational opportunities that make professional development more accessible.

BY THE NUMBERS*

8,333	NTI Attendees
293	Educational Sessions
37.75	Available CE
30	Scholarships Awarded

*In-person and virtual



ECCO

For many organizations, ECCO provides the foundation for onboarding and developing nurses entering acute, progressive, and critical care.

This year, AACN continued enhancing ECCO to provide current, evidence-based education that helps organizations prepare nurses for increasingly complex patient care while supporting a consistent learning experience across care settings.

BY THE NUMBERS

300+	Organizations Using ECCO
33,000+	Learners Enrolled
8	Updated Modules



Publications

Throughout FY26, AACN expanded member access to trusted clinical and scholarly content. In January 2026, AACN moved its journal program to a digital default model and expanded the member benefit to include AACN Advanced Critical Care, making immediate online access to three peer-reviewed journals available to more than 136,000 members while preserving print as an option.

Early results suggest broader reach: 39% of respondents to an ACC readership survey said they began reading the journal after it became a membership benefit.

BY THE NUMBERS

16	Journal Issues Published
2	Self Published Books
6	Ask the Experts Columns
2	AACN Practice Alerts

Building Community

Professional communities are built over time and they rarely begin with a strategic plan or a formal introduction.

More often, they begin when someone shares an experience, asks a question or extends an invitation. For example, AACN’s professional community started more than 50 years ago with a few nurses discussing how to solve a problem around a kitchen table.

Those moments may seem small but they create the relationships that keep people connected to one another and to the profession. They encourage collaboration, strengthen leadership and remind nurses they are part of something larger than themselves.

Community by the Numbers

A community of nurses who show up, give back, learn, lead and lift one another.



Connecting Nurses

A stronger community for a brighter tomorrow.

Throughout the year, AACN continued creating opportunities for connections through chapters, volunteer leadership, recognition programs, membership and events that bring nurses together to learn, share ideas and support one another.



Membership

Membership is more than access to resources. It creates opportunities for nurses to connect with peers who understand the challenges and rewards of acute and critical care nursing while providing education, clinical resources, publications and professional support throughout every stage of a career.



Chapters

Local chapters continue to create opportunities for nurses to connect in their own communities through educational events, networking, volunteer opportunities and professional support. Whether gathering for an evening education program or welcoming a first-time attendee, chapters help turn professional relationships into lasting connections.



Online Communities

Throughout the year, nurses continued sharing ideas, asking questions and learning from one another through AACN’s online communities and digital engagement opportunities. On average, more than 1 in 3 community members actively engage in AACN’s online communities. These conversations help members find support, exchange knowledge and stay connected regardless of where they practice.

GIVING BACK

Volunteer Leadership

Thousands of volunteer hours help move AACN’s mission forward each year. Board members, committee volunteers, reviewers, faculty, chapter leaders and subject matter experts contribute their time and expertise to strengthen programs, shape resources and support the nursing profession. AACN Ambassadors help introduce colleagues to the value of professional involvement by sharing resources, encouraging certification and creating connections within their organizations. They serve as trusted peers who help bring AACN closer to nurses where they work every day.

Coming Together

National Teaching Institute (NTI)

Learning. Connecting. Belonging.

For many nurses, NTI is the one time each year they reconnect with longtime colleagues, meet new peers and build relationships that continue well beyond the conference. While education brings people together, it's often the conversations between sessions that strengthen the sense of community.



Elevating the Profession

Progress often begins with a simple question, “Why do we do it this way?”

Healthcare has always evolved because people were willing to challenge assumptions, share what they learned and look for better ways to care for patients. Nursing is no different. Every new standard, practice resource or research study begins with someone asking how care can be improved. AACN continues to support that work by bringing together research, clinical expertise and advocacy to help nurses advance practice and improve outcomes for critically ill patients and their families.

Advancing the Practice

Better care begins with better evidence. Throughout the year, AACN continued supporting research, developing clinical resources and updating practice alerts and standards that help nurses apply the latest evidence with confidence. The Clinical Scene Investigator (CSI) Academy is built on a simple idea: the people closest to patient care are often the best positioned to improve it. Through leadership development, coaching and mentoring, direct care nurses learn how to turn ideas into measurable improvements for their patients, colleagues and organizations. This year, the Academy continued expanding through new sponsored cohorts focused on strengthening healthy work environments and supporting the nursing workforce.

CSI ACADEMY HIGHLIGHTS

- Eight sponsored Nursing Workforce Solutions cohorts launched
- Received sponsorship from Johnson & Johnson to launch 8 cohorts
- Massachusetts Hospital Association partnership expanded
- Applications opened for 2027 cohorts
- New CSI Speaker Bureau introduced



Shaping the Future of Nursing

Throughout the year, AACN collaborated with healthcare organizations, academic institutions and national partners to advance shared priorities and strengthen nursing practice. AACN also continued representing the interests of acute and critical care nurses through advocacy efforts, public policy and position statements that help ensure the voice of nursing remains part of important healthcare conversations.

Sharing What We Learn

New knowledge has the greatest impact when it’s shared. Through journals, publications, podcasts, newsletters, media outreach and other educational resources, AACN continued helping nurses stay informed about emerging evidence, evolving standards and advances in acute and critical care practice. Together, these resources extend AACN’s reach beyond conferences and classrooms, supporting nurses wherever they practice. New knowledge has a greater impact when it is accessible, trustworthy and easy to use. During FY26, AACN completed an independent accessibility assessment of its journal platform and began remediation work, while strengthening guidance on responsible AI use for authors, reviewers and editors and evaluating tools to identify problematic citations and other research-integrity concerns. Together, this work supports the reliable dissemination of evidence to nurses wherever they practice.

Elevating the Profession by the Numbers

248	Journal Articles Published	21	Quality Improvement Articles
44	Podcast Episodes	44	Reviews and Clinical/Case Reports
24,758	Podcast Listens	6	Position Statements
292,569	Newsletter Subscribers	112	Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles
47	Primary Research Studies	43	Advocacy Actions

More Progress This Year

- New standards
- Journal titles now digital by default
- Journal accessibility and research integrity work advanced
- Research partnerships
- Legislative engagement

Moments That Move Us

Not everything that matters can be measured.

Every year has milestones that are easy to count and others that are impossible to quantify. A nurse earns a certification. A unit celebrates Beacon recognition. A volunteer says yes to a new opportunity.

Individually, these moments may seem small. Together, they tell the story of a profession that continues to celebrate excellence, invest in one another and find purpose in the work of caring for others.



Celebrating one another strengthens the community we share.

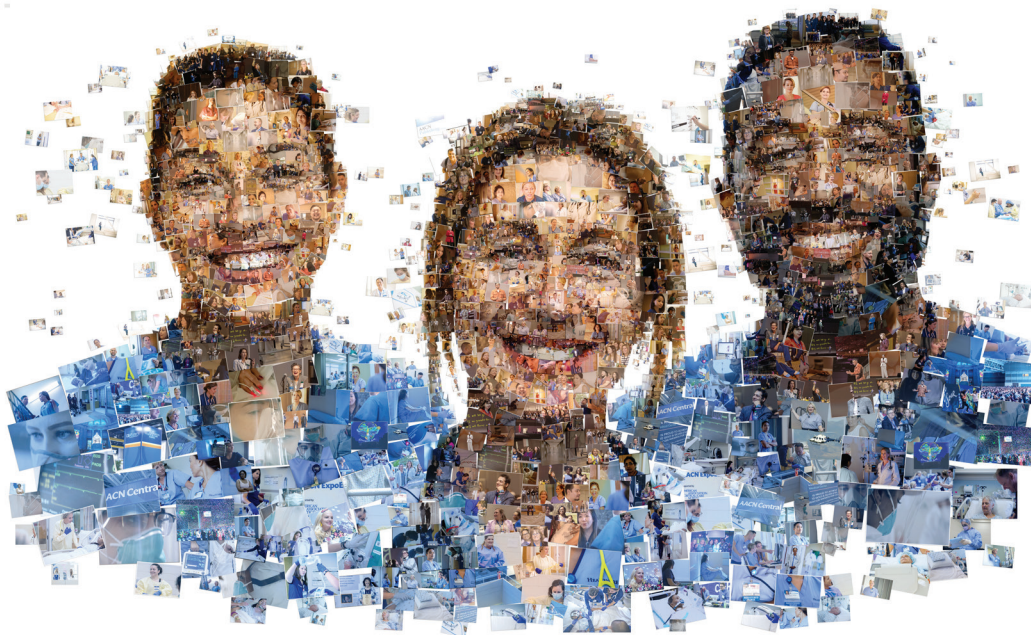


Looking Forward to Where We're Headed

Every year brings new challenges, questions and opportunities to learn. While healthcare continues to evolve, one thing remains constant: nurses continue adapting, leading and finding better ways to care for patients and support one another.

Looking ahead means paying attention to what is changing while remaining grounded in the values that define the profession. The work outlined throughout this report provides a foundation for what's next but it also points toward new opportunities to strengthen nursing in the years ahead.

The future will bring new questions.
AACN remains committed to listening, learning
and helping nurses find the answers.



EVERY
Voice. EVERY
Story.
EVERY
Table.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
of CRITICAL-CARE NURSES