

Candidate for President-Elect

Tonka Williams, MHA, MSN, RN, CMSRN
Senior Nursing Director of Practice and Innovation
MedStar Washington Hospital Center
Washington, DC



Experience and Activities

AACN Commitment and Involvement, 2021-present

Includes ways in which the candidate integrated the mission and work of AACN into their current role and practice. Local and national volunteer activities are listed, if applicable.

- Ambassador, 2017-present
- AACN Certification Corporation board of directors, July 2023-June 2025
- AACN board of directors, July 2021-June 2024
 - Treasurer, July 2022-June 2023
- AACN - AACN Certification Corporation Nominating Committee, 2024-2025

Key Professional Activities Outside AACN, 2021-present

Includes involvement with other professional organizations, teaching and/or speaking engagements

- Presenter, “Careers and Conversations in Critical Care,” UNCF Healthcare Workforce Diversity, Washington, DC, October 2024
- Presenter, “Courage to Soar: My Journey into Nursing,” Blue Ridge Chapter of AACN, Harrisonburg, VA, September 2024
- Co-presenter, Satellite Media Tour, The John Ritter Foundation for Aortic Health & Amy Yasbeck – Advocating for Aortic Health Awareness, 28 national interviews, August 2024
- Presenter, “Why Should Nurses Be Involved in Health Policy?” James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, July 2023, October 2024

Issues Statement

Seventy-two percent of nurses reported experiencing incivility or violence within the year, and the crisis has worsened (source: 2021 AACN Healthy Work Environment (HWE) Survey). Incivility puts patient safety, quality of care and nurse well-being at risk. When nurse well-being is compromised, the work environment deteriorates, job satisfaction diminishes and turnover rates accelerate.

The imperative to address incivility is clear. Since 2005, AACN has led efforts to foster environments where nurses can thrive and deliver high standards of care. Current priorities include national and hospital-based initiatives. Nationally, AACN has partnered with Johnson & Johnson to launch a team-based program to boost nurse satisfaction, retention and healthier work environments. Additionally, a partnership with the AARP Campaign for Action and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded projects offering promising solutions to strengthen and diversify the nursing workforce through innovative nurse recruitment and retention strategies that establish and sustain healthy, equitable work environments.

Hospital-based tools provide practical options to build a culture of respect and responsibility at both a unit and organizational level. The updated Healthy Work Environment Assessment Tool (HWEAT) offers an evidence-based framework to assess the team's work environment and determine actionable steps focusing on domains such as collaboration, leadership, staffing and recognition.

AACN's Beacon Award for Excellence extends the impact of the HWE standards by recognizing hospital units that excel in sustaining high standards of nursing care and work environments. Beacon units serve as national exemplars, demonstrating best practices in HWE implementation that other units can adopt and setting a national standard of excellence. As more units work toward Beacon status, HWE principles gain traction across the healthcare system, reinforcing a culture where respect and professional behavior become the norm.

Leveraging the Healthy Work Environment Standards, AACN can lead the charge against incivility, advancing the nursing profession and ensuring a brighter, healthier future for nurses and patients.