

Nebraska Nursing Leadership Conference

April 9, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Younes Conference Center - South | Kearney, NE

PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

Nebraska Hospital Association, CHI Health: CAH Network, Heartland Health Alliance, Nebraska Organization for Nursing Leadership, Nebraska State Office of Rural Health, Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network

Nebraska Nursing Leadership Conference

OVERVIEW

This program has been designed to meet the education needs of health care professionals including hospital and clinic nursing leaders, focusing on managing teams, recruitment and retention, communication skills, health care finance, and mentorships.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Nurse Leaders in Nebraska

DATE

Thursday, April 9, 2026
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

LOCATION

Younes Conference Center - South
[416 Talmadge St, Kearney, NE 68845](#)

REGISTER

NHA Nurse Leadership Conference 2026
[Register Here!](#)

LODGING

For overnight stays on **April 8, 2026**, a room block is available at [Fairfield Inn & Suites](#) for \$154.95 + tax. **Reserve by March 18** by calling [\(308\) 236-4200](#) or [booking online](#).
After this date, rates cannot be guaranteed.

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SPEAKERS

Alecia Neidig, MSN, RN
Director of Professional Practice
Columbus Community Hospital

Christine Arasmith
Payroll Assistant
Columbus Community Hospital

Dona Kudron, MSN, RN
Director of Outpatient Nursing Services
Columbus Community Hospital

Heidi Keeler, PhD, MBA/MSN, RN
Associate Professor, CON-Omaha Division, Executive Director,
CON CiPDI, Asst. Vice Chancellor, Office of Community
Engagement, Gero Nurse Prep Faculty
University of Nebraska Medical Center

Ryan Bouda, MS
Professional Development Specialist
LEAP Training & Coaching

Sherry Havranek, MA
Sr. Organization Development Consultant
Children's Nebraska

Dr. Renee Thompson, DNP, RN, FAAN
CEO & Founder
Healthy Workforce Institute

Tawny Sandifer, MSN, RN, NEA-BC
Vice President Patient Care & Chief Nursing Officer
Columbus Community Hospital

QUESTIONS?

For questions about content of the conference, contact [Margaret Woepffel](#), Chief Nursing and Informatics Officer.
For questions about registration or lodging, contact [Heather Bullock](#), Director, Executive Operations, at (402) 742-8148.

Accredited Continuing Education

ACCREDITATION STATEMENT

In support of improving patient care, this activity has been planned and implemented by AXIS Medical Education and the Nebraska Hospital Association. AXIS Medical Education is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the health care team.



CREDIT DESIGNATION FOR NURSING

Continuing education credit designation is pending. Final credit information will be provided as soon as accreditation is confirmed.

AXIS CONTACT INFORMATION

For information about the accreditation of this program please contact AXIS info@axismeded.org

At-A-Glance Agenda

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	REGISTRATION
9:00 AM – 9:10 AM	WELCOME
9:10 AM – 10:30 AM	COURAGEOUS COMMUNICATORS: CREATING SPACE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST Ryan Bouda, MS LEAP Training & Coaching
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	BREAK
10:45 AM – 12:00 PM	CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP IN NURSING: MASTERING THE LEADERSHIP Ryan Bouda, MS LEAP Training & Coaching
12:00 PM – 12:45 PM	LUNCH
12:45 PM – 1:45 PM	STUDENT NURSE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: STRUCTURING THE FUTURE & STRENGTHENING THE NURSING WORKFORCE Dona Kudron, MSN, RN Columbus Community Hospital Alecia Neidig, MSN, RN Columbus Community Hospital Christine Arasmith Columbus Community Hospital Tawny Sandifer, MSN, RN, NEA-BC Columbus Community Hospital
1:45 PM – 2:30 PM	WHAT IS A LEADER? MYTH BUSTERS AND REALITY CHECKS Heidi Keeler, PhD, MBA/MSN, RN University of Nebraska Medical Center
2:30 PM – 3:15 PM	SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH CHANGE Sherry Havranek, MA Children's Nebraska
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	BREAK
3:30 PM – 5:00 PM	BREAKING THE CYCLE: EMPOWERING LEADERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING & INCIVILITY Dr. Renee Thompson, DNP, RN, FAAN Healthy Workforce Institute
5:00 PM	WRAP-UP

Agenda

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM

REGISTRATION

9:00 AM – 9:10 AM

WELCOME

9:10 AM – 10:30 AM

COURAGEOUS COMMUNICATORS: CREATING SPACE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

[Ryan Bouda, MS | LEAP Training & Coaching](#)

This version of Courageous Communicators is centered on the day-to-day crucial conversations nursing leaders face: giving feedback, addressing performance concerns, navigating conflict between team members, and speaking up when something doesn't feel right.

Participants are introduced to the ten essential elements of courageous communication, a practical framework for creating space where honest dialogue can occur without defensiveness or shutdown. Through relatable healthcare stories, reflection, and actionable tools, leaders learn how to balance honesty with empathy, stay grounded when emotions run high, and turn difficult conversations into opportunities for trust, growth, and stronger working relationships. Attendees leave with language and strategies they can immediately apply on the unit.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the ten essential elements of courageous communication and explain how they apply to common nursing leadership conversations such as feedback, conflict, and performance concerns.
- Demonstrate techniques for regulating emotional responses during high-stakes conversations to remain present, respectful, and effective.
- Apply practical language and communication strategies to address difficult conversations in ways that strengthen trust, clarity, and working relationships on the unit.

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM

BREAK

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP IN NURSING: MASTERING THE LEADERSHIP

[Ryan Bouda, MS | LEAP Training & Coaching](#)

Nursing leaders operate in high-pressure environments where how they show up matters just as much as what they do. This session introduces the concept of the **Leadership Balcony**, helping leaders step back from reactivity and gain clarity, perspective, and purpose.

Participants explore how their state of being, internal narratives, and leadership strategies directly influence staff engagement, trust, accountability, and culture. Through real-world healthcare examples and practical tools, leaders learn how to respond rather than react, align actions with values, and model consistency, even in challenging moments. This session is especially impactful for charge nurses, managers, and directors navigating complex people and system demands.

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the Leadership Balcony concept and its role in helping nursing leaders gain perspective and reduce reactive leadership behaviors.
- Analyze how a leader's state of being, internal narratives, and leadership strategies influence staff engagement, accountability, and team culture.
- Apply conscious leadership tools to respond intentionally in challenging situations while aligning actions with values and organizational expectations.

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM

LUNCH

Agenda (Cont.)

12:45 PM – 1:45 PM

STUDENT NURSE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: STRUCTURING THE FUTURE & STRENGTHENING THE NURSING WORKFORCE

Dona Kudron, MSN, RN | Columbus Community Hospital
Alecia Neidig, MSN, RN | Columbus Community Hospital
Christine Arasmith | Columbus Community Hospital
Tawny Sandifer, MSN, RN, NEA-BC | Columbus Community Hospital

This presentation explores the development and structure of a Student Nurse Intern Program (SNIP), highlighting its foundational design and implementation process. It examines the program's impact on both participants and the hosting organization, including improvements in clinical readiness, staff engagement, and retention. Finally, it reviews key outcomes and lessons learned, offering insights for future program enhancements and workforce sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the development and structure of a SNIP.
- Discuss the impacts of SNIP on participants involved and the organization.
- Review the outcomes and lessons learned following implementation of a SNIP.

1:45 PM – 2:30 PM

WHAT IS A LEADER? MYTH BUSTERS AND REALITY CHECKS

Heidi Keeler, PhD, MBA/MSN, RN | University of Nebraska Medical Center

This session will pull upon the collective knowledge and experience gained through three decades of leadership experience in various settings. Throughout various situations and challenges, some truths and skills remain constant. This session will review some common myths about leadership, and then provide real life tips/tricks for common leadership situations.

OBJECTIVES

- Articulate the difference between perception and reality of leadership and why this is important.
- Explain how to elevate and motivate when in a leadership position.
- Use 2-3 leadership tools to improve performance in tough leadership situations.

2:30 PM – 3:15 PM

SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH CHANGE

Sherry Havranek, MA | Children's Nebraska

Organizations today are experiencing consistent high level of change. When change initiatives stack up faster than people can absorb them, performance, engagement and adoption suffer. This is known as change saturation, and it can have a tremendous impact on employees and morale.

In this one hour session, participants will hear research on change saturation and explore foundational concepts to help prepare employees for change, equip them for the knowledge and resources needed to be successful during change, and support them on the change journeys we ask of them.

OBJECTIVES

- Attain a deeper awareness of what change management really means.
- Create an understanding that change is a process.
- Maximize insight into the how of leading people through the change process.
- Improve knowledge of how to identify areas of resistance.

Agenda (Cont.)

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM

BREAK

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

BREAKING THE CYCLE: EMPOWERING LEADERS TO ADDRESS BULLYING & INCIVILITY

[Dr. Renee Thompson, DNP, RN, FAAN | Healthy Workforce Institute](#)

In today's healthcare environment, leaders are increasingly faced with the challenges of fostering a healthy and safe workplace. According to recent studies by the AONL Foundation and Joslin's 5th Longitudinal Study, one of the most pressing issues for leaders is addressing workplace violence, bullying, and incivility. A staggering 77% of leaders report having witnessed incivility, while 68% have observed bullying incidents in their organizations. As noted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), this rising trend impacts not only the culture but also the bottom line, with over 71 million daily instances of incivility and an estimated \$2 billion lost daily to these behaviors.

At the Healthy Workforce Institute, our research reveals that leaders struggle with team member behaviors, burnout, negative attitudes, and competing priorities, especially those with two years or less in their roles. However, through focused interventions, organizations have seen reduced turnover, increased employee engagement, and improved interprofessional team relationships. As we explore these pressing issues, today's session will delve into external and internal data and successful strategies for addressing workplace incivility, equipping leaders with the knowledge, skills, and tools to foster healthier, more respectful, and safe workplace cultures.

In this relevant and timely keynote presentation, leaders will walk away with evidence-based, practical strategies to finally break the cycle of workplace bullying and incivility.

OBJECTIVES

- Distinguish the differences between bullying, incivility, and someone having a bad day.
- Identify three strategies to confront disruptive behaviors.
- Summarize how successful leaders address and eliminate disruptive behaviors.

5:00 PM

WRAP-UP

