



**National League
for Nursing**

SECURING LPN/LVN SUPPLY AND CAREER PROGRESSION

A Guidebook for Employers, Educators and Policymakers



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A Guidebook for Employers, Educators, and Policymakers

Led by Dr. Deborah Stamps, EdD, RN, FAAN – Founder and CEO of Deborah Stamps Consulting, LLC

Executive Summary

The licensed practical nurse (LPN) and licensed vocational nurse (LVN) workforce is a foundational pillar of our health care system. They serve at the bedside in long-term care, schools, home care, and community health centers—often delivering culturally responsive, trusted care to patients and families. Yet, their contributions are far too often underrecognized, underutilized, and undersupported.

The Securing LPN Supply and Career Progression Learning Collaborative, in partnership with AARP, represents a diverse coalition of educators, employers, advocates, and policy experts from across the United States.

This guidebook outlines a dual-action strategy to support and retain LPNs/LVNs in their current roles and create pathways for them to become registered nurses (RNs). It provides practical strategies, real-world case examples, and policy recommendations for healthcare employers, nursing schools, funders, and policymakers.

The nation is facing a nursing workforce crisis driven by retirements, nursing burnout, and growing healthcare needs in an aging population. While RN shortages are well documented, a parallel concern—often unaddressed—is the loss of experienced LPNs and LVNs. This guidebook presents a dual approach: (1) retaining LPNs/LVNs in the workforce by recognizing and supporting them and (2) creating equitable, scalable pathways for career progression into RN roles. Supporting the LPN and LVN workforce and their academic progression will help address the healthcare needs of an aging population.

Through the collaborative efforts led by AARP, this guide provides employers, educators, and policymakers with actionable strategies. By highlighting best practices and innovative models across the country, we demonstrate that LPN/LVN empowerment is essential to ensuring high-quality, culturally competent, and equitable care across diverse populations. We also provide key policy recommendations to address the regulatory, financial, and institutional barriers that limit LPN/LVN advancement and recognition.

Why LPNs/LVNs Matter

LPNs and LVNs are a vital component of the U.S. healthcare system. They are trusted caregivers, educators, and community connectors. They provide culturally competent care and serve as a vital bridge into the nursing profession. Their scope of practice includes providing bedside care, administering medications, assisting in procedures, and maintaining patient comfort and dignity. LPNs/LVNs frequently serve in long-term care settings, home health, and community-based programs, where they establish meaningful, long-term relationships with patients. Because of their frontline positioning, LPNs/LVNs often become cultural brokers and health educators, helping to build trust and close gaps in care access. Despite their significant contributions, this workforce remains undervalued and underutilized.

National authorities indicate that diverse nursing teams—including LPNs and LVNs—are more effective in addressing the needs of multicultural patient populations (American Nurses Association, 2023; IOM, 2011; National League for Nursing [NLN], 2016). Furthermore, their practical experience is invaluable in mentoring new RNs, especially in high-turnover settings. Yet, LPNs/LVNs are often not included in leadership development and decision-making processes. This lack of inclusion not only diminishes workforce morale but contributes to increased attrition and missed opportunities for system-wide improvement.

Current State of the LPN Workforce (2024)

The 2024 National Nursing Workforce Survey offers a detailed look at the LPN/LVN workforce across the U.S., drawing from over 200,000 responses spanning all 53 jurisdictions (Smiley et al., 2025). These data highlight critical trends impacting workforce planning, policy, and education.

The median age of LPN/LVNs is now 50, an increase from 46 in 2022, signaling a rebound among experienced nurses post-pandemic. Gender diversity remains limited, with men comprising only 9% of the workforce, down slightly from 10% in 2022. However, among African American LPN/LVNs, men represent a notable 21%—highlighting pockets of increased gender diversity.

Nationally, there are over 1,100 approved LPN/LPV programs, which serve as the primary pipeline into the profession. While most LPNs/LVNs enter the workforce with a vocational certificate (75%), only a small percentage go on to obtain RN licensure. Between 2015 and 2023, the median RN conversion rate was just 8.9%, with a median time to conversion of 1,156 days—indicating a slow and limited academic progression.

Workplace distribution reflects longstanding trends: approximately 32% of LPN/LVNs work in nursing homes or extended care facilities, while others are employed in hospitals, home health, ambulatory care, and correctional settings. These roles are often vital to underserved and aging populations.

Median annual pre-tax earnings have risen to \$58,000, up from \$50,000 in 2022, likely influenced by inflation and increased demand for nursing services. Telehealth is increasingly part of LPN practice, with 21% engaged in virtual care, particularly via electronic messaging.

While emotional exhaustion has decreased since 2022, 41% of LPN/LVNs report plans to leave or retire within five years. These realities underscore the need for urgent strategies to recruit, retain, and advance LPNs, particularly in high-demand practice areas like long-term and home-based care.

Challenges Facing the Workforce

The challenges facing the LPN/LVN workforce are multifaceted and include a lack of recognition, limited career pathways, scope-of-practice restrictions, and an aging workforce. Demographic data show that over 50% of LPNs/LVNs are over age 45, and many are approaching retirement (BLS, 2023). Simultaneously, younger nurses often bypass LPN/LVN licensure altogether, leading to a decline in new LPN/LVN entrants. Add to this the inconsistent state-level nurse practice laws, many LPNs/LVNs are left unable to practice to their full training and ability.

Further, LPNs/LVNs often experience lower compensation, reduced visibility in institutional planning, and fewer promotional opportunities compared to RNs. Lack of educational mobility can prevent LPNs/LVNs from advancing professionally, particularly when programs are inflexible, unaffordable, or lack academic credit recognition. These barriers limit not only the LPNs'/LVNs' growth but also the system's capacity to develop experienced RNs from within. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring a strong and sustainable nursing workforce.

Our Double Aim

1. Support and Elevate LPNs/LVNs in Their Current Roles
2. Create Clear and Equitable Pathways for Advancement

This dual strategy helps retain valuable talent and grows the RN pipeline from within the nursing workforce.

Key Strategies for Employers & Educators

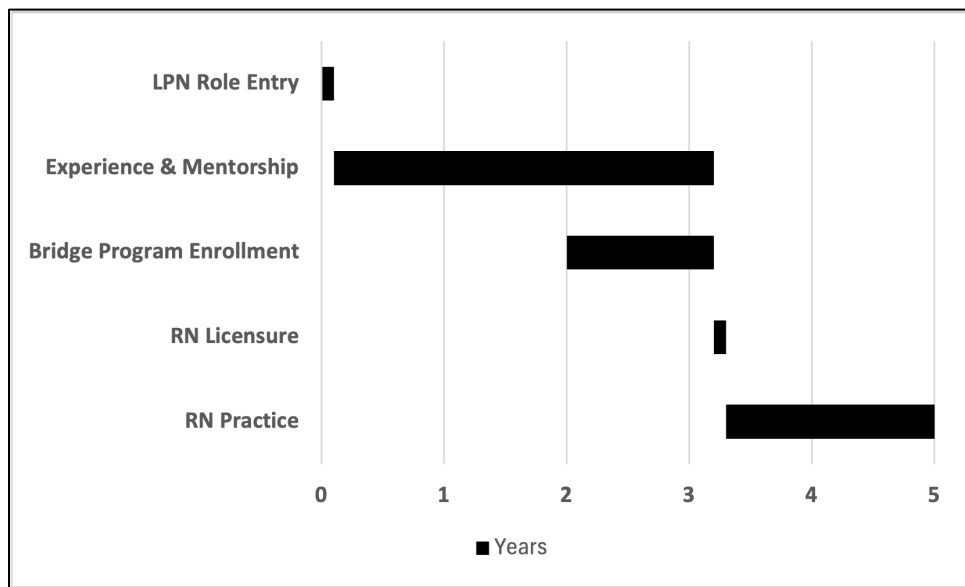
Key strategies include bridge programs, recognition programs, skill development, wraparound supports, workforce planning, and partnerships between employers and educators.

LPN/LVN-to-RN Career Advancement Pathway

This timeline visualizes the typical progression of an LPN/LVN who chooses to advance into an RN role. The journey begins with entry-level practice, followed by mentorship and skill development. Enrollment in a bridge program marks the formal

transition process, culminating in RN licensure and practice. The timeline highlights how structured support across this pathway could reduce attrition and accelerate professional growth.

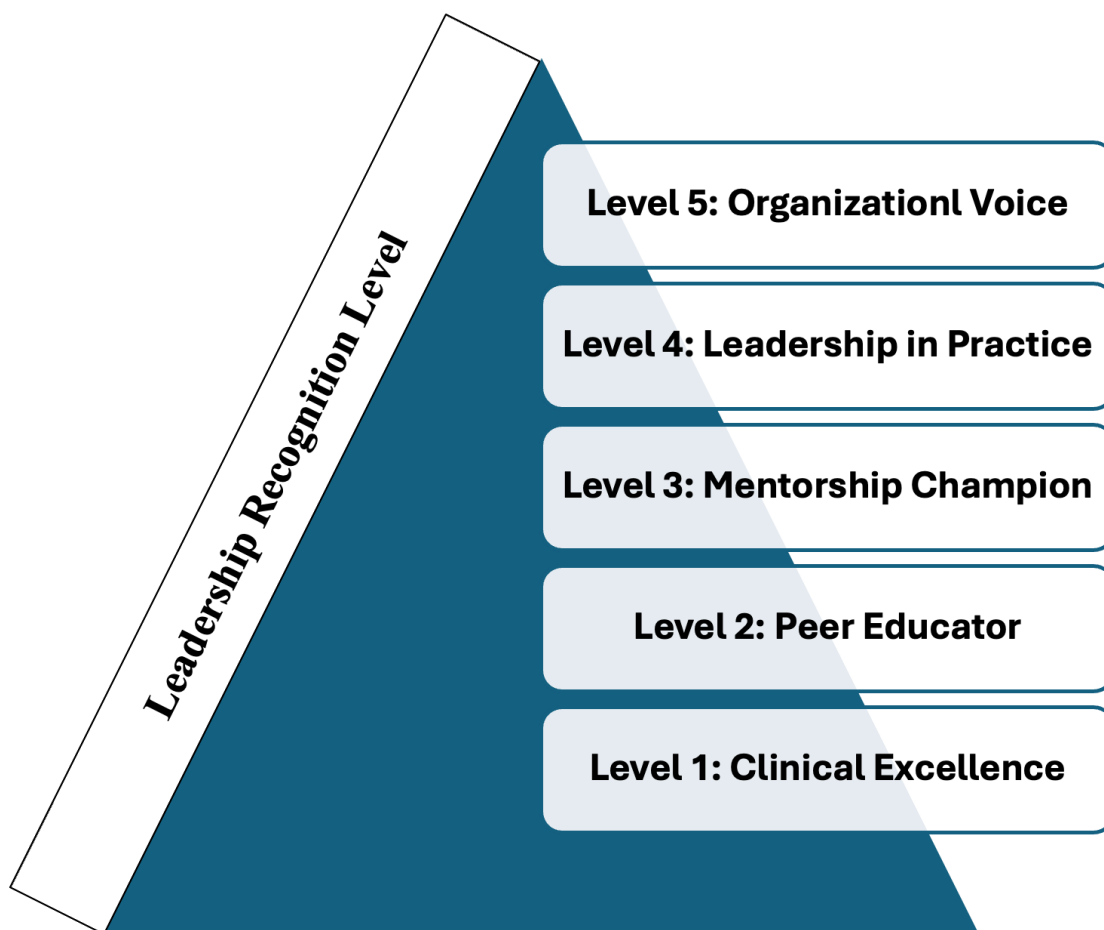
Figure 1. LPN/LVN-to-RN Career Advancement Pathway. (Figure source: Dr. Deborah Stamps.)



LPN/LVN Recognition & Leadership Framework

This framework illustrates progressive levels of recognition for LPNs/LVNs, from excellence in clinical care to organizational leadership. By formally acknowledging the diverse ways LPNs/LVNs contribute to healthcare delivery—such as mentoring, peer education, and advocacy—employers can enhance job satisfaction, foster loyalty, and improve retention. This visual emphasizes the importance of a clear internal ladder for leadership and development.

Figure 2. LPN/LVN Recognition and Leadership Framework. (Figure courtesy of Dr. Deborah Stamps.)



Wraparound Supports Model for LPN/LVN Success

The wraparound supports model showcases a holistic approach to enabling LPNs/LVNs to succeed. It identifies critical needs—such as tuition assistance, flexible scheduling, childcare, coaching, and mental health resources—that can be addressed for career progression and retention. These interconnected supports remove barriers and promote equity, especially for nurses balancing work, education, and family responsibilities.

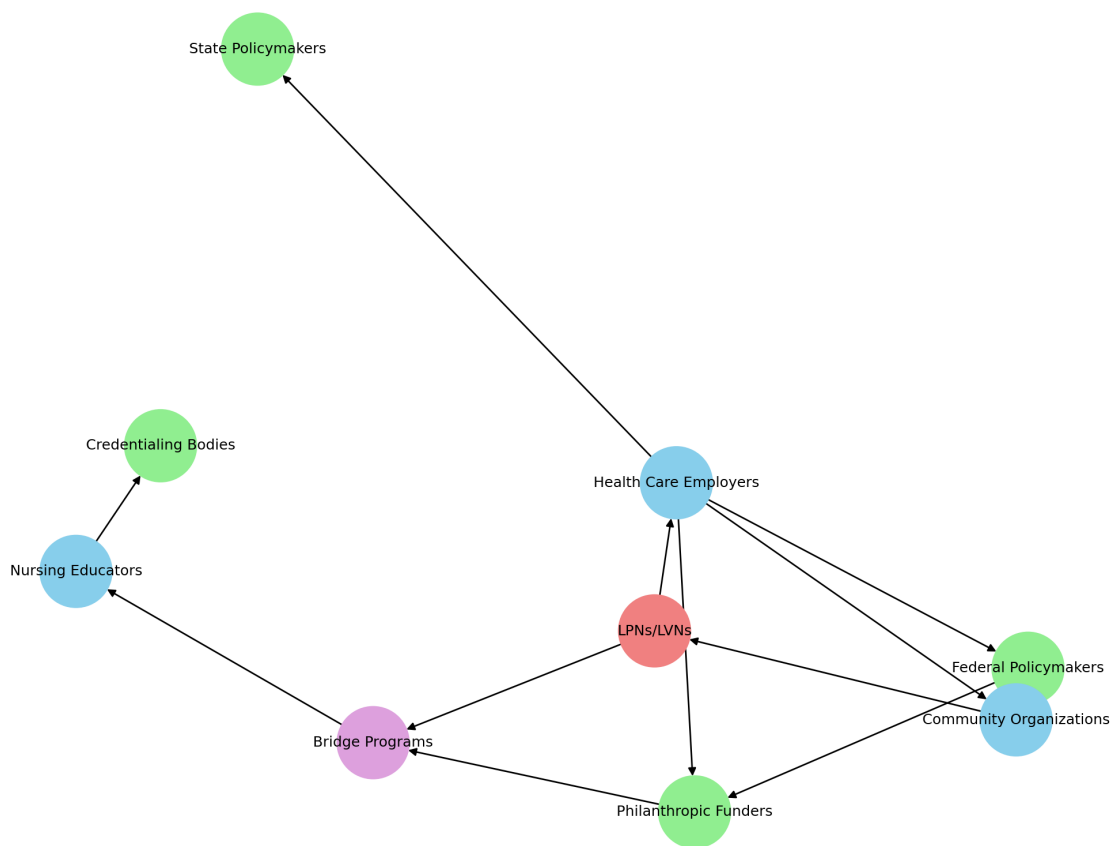
Figure 3. Wraparound Supports Model or LPN/LVN Success. (Figure courtesy of Dr. Deborah Stamps.)



Institutional-Policy Ecosystem Map

This ecosystem map demonstrates the dynamic relationships between various stakeholders—LPNs/LVNs, employers, educators, policymakers, and funders—who all influence the workforce landscape. It highlights the need for coordinated efforts, including bridge program funding, regulatory reform, and academic-employer collaboration, to create a seamless, supportive environment for LPN/LVN advancement and workforce sustainability.

Figure 4. Map of Relationships for the Institutional-Policy Ecosystem. (Figure courtesy of Dr. Deborah Stamps.)



Exemplars to Address the Challenges Facing the Workforce

The following section provides exemplars on how to address the challenge of the perceived lack of a career path for those who may be interested in becoming an LPN/LVN.

The Ballard Health Academy Exemplar

The Ballard Health Academy (2025) LPN Nursing Pathway Program is a transformative, no-cost opportunity designed for high school students across Appalachian Tennessee who aspire to pursue a career in nursing. Launching in Fall 2025, the program offers a structured, school-within-a-school model that integrates seamlessly into the high school curriculum, allowing students to begin their healthcare journey as early as 9th grade.

Ultimately, the Ballard Health Academy (2025) LPN Nursing Pathway Program empowers students—especially those from underserved backgrounds—with early exposure, mentorship, and a direct route to a rewarding healthcare career. It's not just a program—it's a movement to grow the next generation of nurses from the communities they will serve.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Exemplar

Through a combination of dual-enrollment coursework with Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) and local community colleges, students engage in foundational nursing classes, including anatomy, pharmacology, and patient care. The program includes hands-on simulation labs and real clinical experiences, preparing students to graduate high school with Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credentials and progress toward Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) licensure.

What sets this program apart is its full financial support—covering tuition, lab fees, books, transportation, and uniforms. Students can graduate career-ready, with guaranteed job interviews at Ballard Health and entry-level LPN salaries averaging \$21–\$23 per hour. The program also offers continued support for those who wish to pursue RN credentials after graduation, creating a clear, supported pathway from high school to nursing roles.

Currently available in seven high schools across northeastern Tennessee, the initiative is backed by a \$15.3 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies. It emphasizes workforce development, health equity, and local economic growth by equipping youth from rural communities with skills to meet critical healthcare needs in their regions.

Parkview Health Exemplar

Parkview Health, the largest healthcare employer in northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio, is launching a dedicated LPN program aimed at strengthening bedside care teams and supporting the career advancement of its existing workforce. In response to a critical shortage of bedside nurses—who represent 20% of the system’s open positions (Brigle, 2019)—Parkview is investing in a multifaceted initiative that blends education, on-the-job training, and tuition support.

At its heart, the program integrates LPNs directly into patient-facing units such as medical/surgical, rehabilitation, and long-term care, where RNs and LPNs collaborate closely. This partnership—showcased in a blog featuring team members like Damaris and Jasmyn—helps deliver more timely, coordinated care and fosters professional growth through peer mentorship and delegation skills (People of Parkview, 2023).

To build internal capacity, Parkview is expanding educational support for current employees who wish to become LPNs. Through its rich suite of development services—from clinical orientation and simulation labs to tuition assistance, certification reimbursement, and continued education—the program offers a robust pathway for career progression. Additionally, the Questa Education Foundation, in partnership with Parkview, offers forgivable loans of up to \$2,500 to those in their final year of LPN training who commit to work within the Parkview network after graduation (Questa Education Foundation, 2025).

By combining internal upskilling with external support, Parkview is not only filling urgent clinical roles but also empowering staff to grow professionally within their local healthcare system. Their approach—bolstered by Magnet-level nursing standards, structured residency pathways, and strong interprofessional collaboration—demonstrates a sustained investment in both employee development and high-quality patient care (Beswick, 2022).

Voices from the Field – Lived Experience and Leadership

The stories of LPNs and LVNs illuminate both the challenges and opportunities within healthcare systems. These voices reflect real journeys—each shaped by commitment, resilience, and a desire to serve communities. Their testimonials illustrate the importance of recognizing and investing in their potential.

I became an LPN at age 23 after caring for my grandmother. The job helped me support my family and inspired me to keep growing. I went back to school through a bridge program sponsored by my hospital. Today, I’m an RN and precept new hires—including LPNs starting where I did. — RN, Georgia

I’ve worked as an LPN in long-term care for over 18 years. I know every resident and family member by name. I may not be a manager, but I lead in my own

way—by teaching younger nurses, solving problems on the floor, and advocating for our patients every day. — LPN, Michigan

I wanted to become an RN, but with two children and a full-time job, it wasn't easy. Thanks to a scholarship and a supportive employer, I found a flexible online LPN-to-RN program. Now I'm mentoring others to follow the same path. — RN, North Carolina

Call to Action – What You Can Do Now

Supporting and advancing the LPN/LVN workforce is a shared responsibility. Whether you are an employer, educator, policymaker, funder, or advocate, your leadership matters.

What employers can do:

- Establish structured LPN/LVN career ladders and advancement opportunities.
- Fund tuition reimbursement and mentorship programs.
- Include LPNs/LVNs in governance councils and leadership training.

What educators can do:

- Design flexible, hybrid LPN/LVN-to-RN programs with credit for prior learning.
- Partner with health systems for work-based learning and career coaching.
- Reduce unnecessary barriers for LPNs/LVNs returning to school.

What policymakers can do:

- Modernize scope-of-practice laws to reflect LPN/LVN competencies.
- Direct public workforce funding to LPN/LVN-to-RN bridge models.
- Incentivize employer investment in workforce development.

What philanthropists and funders can do:

- Fund wraparound services like childcare, transportation, and mental health.
- Invest in research and innovation focused on equitable workforce strategies.
- Elevate LPN/LVN voices through storytelling and leadership development.

Together, we can shape a future where every LPN and LVN is valued, supported, and empowered to thrive—and where healthcare is stronger because of it.

Resources and Appendices – Expanded Tools and Templates

This section provides practical tools, templates, and program models to support stakeholders—employers, educators, and policymakers—in implementing the strategies outlined throughout this guide. Each resource is designed to be adaptable based on organizational size, setting, and regional needs.

Sample Tools and Templates

- **LPN/LVN-to-RN Career Ladder Template (see Appendix A):**
A visual progression map that details stages such as LPN entry, mentorship, bridge program enrollment, RN licensure, and RN employment. This template can be customized by employers and educators to reflect local resources and program options.
- **Internal Advancement Framework Sample (see Appendix B):**
A policy tool that outlines institutional criteria for recognizing LPNs who take on expanded roles—such as peer educator, charge nurse, or quality champion. Includes tiered performance expectations and corresponding incentives (stipends, professional development, recognition).
- **LPN/LVN Workforce Retention Survey Template (see Appendix C):**
A short, anonymous survey tool to assess LPN/LVN job satisfaction, perceived career support, challenges, and future goals. Sample questions include:
 - What would help you grow in your current role?
 - Have you considered returning to school? Why or why not?
 - Do you feel your contributions are recognized by leadership?

Featured Programs

- **Tennessee “Bridge to RN” Workforce Initiative:**
A state-supported program that partners health systems with community colleges to create flexible LPN-to-RN pipelines. The model includes online courses, employer-paid tuition, and mentorship by RNs.
- **New York SUNY Workforce Development Pathways:**
Funded by state workforce funds, this initiative supports adult learners, including LPNs, with stackable credentials and onsite clinical rotations. Emphasis is placed on increasing access for underrepresented populations.
- **Maryland Employer-Academic Partnership Model:**
This model aligns employer workforce needs with community college curriculum. LPNs receive academic credit for prior learning and can transition into ADN or BSN programs with minimal disruption to employment.

Suggested Metrics for Evaluation

To track progress and evaluate the impact of LPN/LVN support and advancement efforts, the following metrics can be collected and reported:

- **LPN/LVN Retention Rates:** Annual percentage of LPNs/LVNs who remain employed at the organization at 13 months.
- **LPN/LVN-to-RN Transition Completions:** Number of employees who successfully complete a bridge program and obtain RN licensure.
- **Employee Satisfaction Scores:** Results from annual staff engagement surveys, with LPN/LVN-specific insights.
- **Representation in Leadership Roles:** Number and percent of LPNs/LVNs serving on committees, in preceptor roles, or in supervisory positions.

NLN Role and Competencies for the LPN/LVN Educator & National Certification Program

The NLN, a leading voice in nursing education, has recognized the vital role of LPN/LVN educators in shaping the next generation of LPNs/LVNs. In response to workforce needs and the growing demand for skilled faculty in LPN/LVN programs, the NLN established a formal set of roles and competencies for the LPN/LVN Educator—providing a national framework to guide professional development and instructional excellence (Christensen & Simmons, 2026).

These competencies emphasize five key areas: facilitates learning, provides assessment and evaluation of learners, participates in program evaluation and revision, collaborates with partners in the learning environment, fosters a positive learning environment, supports the program and organization, and engages in professional development (Christensen & Simmons, 2026). The framework ensures that LPN/LVN educators are equipped not only to teach clinical and classroom content but also to mentor, assess, and support diverse student populations in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

In 2024, the NLN launched a groundbreaking national certification program specifically for LPN/LVN educators. This certification validates the expertise of LVN/LPN faculty and affirms their role as competent, qualified, and committed professionals. The certification process includes eligibility criteria, a comprehensive exam based on the educator competencies, and ongoing professional development to maintain credentialing.

This recognition marks a significant step forward in elevating the status of LPN/LVN educators, aligning them with the broader community of nurse educators, and providing clear pathways for career progression. It also addresses a critical gap in the LPN/LVN education infrastructure by supporting quality instruction, standardization, and the recruitment of new faculty in high-need areas.

The NLN's work affirms that LPN/LVN educators are essential to strengthening the nursing pipeline, particularly in meeting the needs of diverse, aging, and rural populations—ultimately improving outcomes across the entire continuum of care.

The Importance of Forming Coalitions and Benefits for LPNs

In today's dynamic healthcare environment, LPNs/LVNs face numerous challenges—from limited visibility in policy discussions to constrained opportunities for career advancement. Forming coalitions—collaborative partnerships among educators, employers, policymakers, professional associations, and community organizations—is essential to addressing these challenges and unlocking new opportunities for the LPN/LVN workforce.

Coalitions amplify the collective voice of LPNs/LVNs, ensuring they are represented in workforce planning, health policy, and education reform efforts. When stakeholders align around common goals—such as improving LPN/LVN recruitment, retention, and academic progression—they can create stronger, more coordinated strategies that drive systemic change.

For LPNs/LVNs, coalition-building brings several benefits. First, it increases access to resources, such as continuing education, scholarships, mentorship programs, and clinical placements. Second, coalitions foster workforce development initiatives, including LPN/LVN-to-RN bridge programs and apprenticeships, which remove barriers to advancement. Third, they strengthen policy advocacy, ensuring that LPNs/LVNs have a seat at the table in discussions on licensure, scope of practice, and funding.

Coalitions also benefit healthcare institutions and communities. They support the development of equitable pipelines that bring underrepresented groups into nursing, particularly in rural and underserved areas where LPNs/LVNs are essential providers. They also enable the sharing of best practices and promote innovation in LPN/LVN roles, including telehealth, care coordination, and chronic disease management.

Ultimately, coalitions foster a culture of collaboration over competition, creating sustainable solutions that empower LPNs/LVNs to thrive and contribute fully to healthcare systems. By working together across sectors, we can elevate the profession, expand opportunities, and ensure that LPNs/LVNs are recognized, supported, and positioned for long-term success in an evolving healthcare landscape.

You Have to Be It to See It – Youth Apprenticeships and Early Exposure Pathways

Building a sustainable and diverse nursing workforce must start early—before students ever enroll in college. To ensure long-term supply of LPNs/LVNs and RNs,

we must invest in programs that expose high school students to nursing careers and provide opportunities to gain experience, confidence, and credentials.

Youth apprenticeships and early exposure pathways allow students—particularly those from underserved or underrepresented backgrounds—to explore healthcare careers while still in high school. These programs are a powerful way to diversify the pipeline, build awareness of the LPN/LVN and RN roles, and provide real-world experience that supports future education and employment.

Key Features of Youth Apprenticeship Pathways

- **Dual Enrollment and Credit Articulation:** Students take college-level nursing prerequisite courses in high school that count toward future LPN/LVN or RN programs.
- **Hands-On Learning:** Participation in clinical shadowing, simulations, or certified nursing assistant (CNA) programs as a foundation for LPN/LVN training.
- **Mentorship and Career Coaching:** Pairing high school students with practicing LPNs/LVNs, RNs, or nursing students to provide support, answer questions, and inspire confidence.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Paid apprenticeships with healthcare providers offer students practical experience while earning a wage.
- **Cultural Relevance:** Programs designed with representation in mind—led by and inclusive of nurses who reflect the communities they serve.

Model Programs and Success Stories

- **Maryland Youth Apprenticeship Program** (Maryland Department of Labor, n.d.): High school students earn credit and wages while working with local long-term care providers and community health centers. Several go on to become LPNs or enroll in RN programs.
- **CareerWise Colorado (n.d.) Nursing Track:** Apprentices split their time between school and work, earning credentials and building clinical skills while gaining priority admission to LPN or ADN programs.
- **Rochester Public Schools (2025) Health Science Pathway:** Students explore nursing careers, complete CNA training, and are supported by local nursing schools and hospitals for LPN or RN advancement.

Youth programs are not just about filling future roles—they're about sparking inspiration, cultivating equity, and showing young people that they belong in the profession. When students see someone who looks like them in a nursing role, they begin to imagine themselves there. As the saying goes, "You have to be it to see it."

Mentorship Programs for LPNs/LVNs and Nursing Students

Mentorship is a powerful driver of career satisfaction, retention, and advancement—especially for nurses navigating complex educational or professional transitions. For LPNs/LVNs and nursing students, mentorship provides not only technical guidance, but also emotional support, confidence building, and a sense of belonging.

Mentorship for Practicing LPNs/LVNs

Practicing LPNs/LVNs benefit from structured mentorship programs that reinforce their role as essential members of the healthcare team and prepare them for leadership or further education.

Key program components include:

- **Peer Support Groups:** Regular meetings facilitated by experienced LPNs/LVNs to discuss clinical challenges, celebrate successes, and build professional networks.
- **Leadership Development Tracks:** Opportunities to serve as preceptors, train new staff, or participate in quality improvement projects.
- **Career Coaching:** One-on-one support to explore education pathways, scholarship options, and licensing questions.
- **Recognition Tiers:** Systems that acknowledge mentorship contributions through certifications, stipends, or professional credits.

Mentorship for Nursing Students and LPN/LVN-to-RN Learners

For students in nursing programs—especially those enrolled in LPN/LVN-to-RN bridge tracks—mentorship helps them navigate academic pressures and role identity transitions.

Successful programs often include:

- **Vertical Peer Mentoring:** RN students mentoring LPN/LVN-to-RN students, or senior students supporting new entrants.
- **Faculty-Led Circles:** Small group mentorship hosted by nursing faculty or practicing clinicians to explore professional topics.
- **Diverse Representation:** Mentors who reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the student population.
- **Integrated Support:** Mentorship linked with academic coaching, tutoring, and mental health services to provide wraparound care.

Program Examples

- **New Jersey LPN Leadership Circles:** A hospital system created monthly support sessions led by seasoned LPNs to support peers in long-term care.
- **Florida Bridge Mentorship Initiative:** LPN-to-RN students were paired with practicing RNs who had successfully transitioned. Results showed higher graduation and licensure rates.

- Minnesota Nursing Mentorship Collaborative (Minnesota Hospital Foundation, n.d.): Community college students were matched with working LPNs and RNs for year-long mentorship focused on career readiness and cultural humility.

Creating a culture of mentorship within healthcare systems and academic institutions helps LPNs/LVNs feel seen, valued, and supported—regardless of whether they remain in their roles or advance. It also builds a more cohesive, empowered, and resilient nursing workforce.

Mentorship Program Implementation Toolkit

This toolkit provides step-by-step guidance for healthcare organizations, nursing schools, and community programs to design, launch, and evaluate mentorship programs for LPNs/LVNs and nursing students. Each component can be adapted based on program size, staffing, and available resources.

Step 1: Define Program Goals

- Clarify the purpose (e.g., retention, academic support, leadership development)
- Identify target audience: practicing LPNs/LVNs, LPN/LVN-to-RN students, pre-licensure nursing students
- Determine expected outcomes (e.g., increased graduation rates, reduced turnover)

Step 2: Design Program Structure

- Choose mentorship format: 1:1, peer group, faculty-led, or hybrid
- Set duration: e.g., 6 months, academic year, onboarding period
- Develop application process for mentors/mentees (voluntary or assigned)
- Establish communication methods: in-person, virtual, phone check-ins

Step 3: Recruit and Train Mentors

- Identify experienced LPNs, LVNs, and RNs willing to serve as mentors
- Offer training in mentorship skills, communication, cultural competency, and goal setting
- Provide resources like conversation starters, boundary guidelines, and escalation protocols

Step 4: Launch and Support

- Match mentors and mentees based on experience, background, or interests
- Offer an orientation session for all participants
- Check in regularly and troubleshoot challenges

- Celebrate progress and share success stories

Step 5: Evaluate and Improve

- Use surveys or interviews to assess satisfaction and impact
- Track metrics such as retention, licensure pass rates, and confidence levels
- Make iterative improvements based on feedback and outcomes

Toolkit Templates (Available on Request)

- Mentor Application Form (see Appendix D)
- Mentee Intake Form (see Appendix E)
- Monthly Check-In Template (see Appendix F)
- Goal-Setting Worksheet (see Appendix G)
- Evaluation Survey Questions (see Appendix H)

Organizations that invest in structured mentorship programs report higher staff satisfaction, stronger interprofessional collaboration, and greater success in supporting LPN/LVN advancement. This toolkit is designed to help scale and sustain these efforts.

Collaborative Strategies for Supporting Academic and Professional Progression

The successful advancement of LPNs/LVNs into RNs and beyond requires intentional collaboration between academic institutions, healthcare employers, policymakers, and community stakeholders. No single sector can solve the nursing workforce crisis alone. A shared investment and aligned strategy are essential to build, sustain, and scale career progression opportunities.

Academic-Practice Partnerships

Academic-practice partnerships are the cornerstone of workforce pipeline development. These collaborations ensure that educational offerings align with real-world clinical needs and that students are supported throughout their training journey.

Key strategies include:

- **Co-designed Curriculum:** Employers and faculty jointly develop coursework that reflects current practice demands and allows for stackable credentials.
- **Shared Clinical Resources:** Institutions provide clinical sites, simulation labs, and preceptors through agreements that benefit both students and employers.
- **Dual Roles:** Nurse educators also working in practice settings to bridge theory and application.

- **Credit for Prior Learning:** Ensuring experienced LPNs receive academic credit that reduces time and cost to RN completion.

Role of Employers

Healthcare institutions can enhance LPN/LVN progression by embedding advancement opportunities into workforce planning:

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Allowing staff to attend classes without losing income or benefits.
- **Tuition Reimbursement and Scholarships:** Reducing the financial burden of returning to school.
- **Leadership Development Tracks:** Elevating LPNs/LVNs as preceptors, unit leaders, and committee participants.
- **Internal Communication Campaigns:** Promoting awareness of LPN/LVN-to-RN pathways within the organization.
-

Role of State and Local Policymakers

Policymakers can create an enabling environment for partnerships by:

- **Investing in Regional Consortia:** Funding local workforce boards to support bridge programs and clinical infrastructure.
- **Modernizing Licensing Pathways:** Streamlining transitions from LPN/LVN to RN through expedited credentialing and recognition of prior learning.
- **Incentivizing Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Offering grants to partnerships that include schools, employers, and community organizations.
- **Tracking Workforce Data:** Using licensing, graduation, and employment data to inform investment decisions and policy reform.

Role of Community Organizations and Philanthropy

Community-based organizations and funders play a vital role in supporting the personal and social needs that impact educational attainment:

- **Wraparound Support Services:** Providing transportation, childcare, food assistance, and mental health support.
- **Scholarships and Emergency Funds:** Filling financial gaps that may prevent LPNs/LVNs from persisting in their programs.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Promoting public understanding of the LPN/LPN-to-RN career pathway and amplifying nurse voices.
- **Outreach and Recruitment:** Identifying youth and adult learners who would benefit from exposure to nursing careers.

By working together, these diverse stakeholders can co-create equitable, sustainable, and future-focused systems that support the lifelong success of LPNs/LVNs, RNs, and the communities they serve.

Belonging to Professional Nursing Organizations: A Key to Empowerment and Growth

Professional organizations play a vital role in advancing the voice, leadership, and development of LPNs/LVNs within the broader nursing profession. Membership offers opportunities for continuing education, policy advocacy, mentorship, networking, and visibility—particularly for those in underrepresented roles or settings. For LPNs and LVNs, belonging to professional associations reinforces a sense of identity and purpose in the healthcare system, and opens doors to resources that support academic and career progression.

Engagement in professional organizations allows LPNs/LVNs to:

- Stay informed about scope-of-practice and licensing updates
- Access discounted continuing education content and credentialing resources
- Join leadership and advocacy opportunities
- Connect with mentors and professional peers
- Promote representation and policy change from within

Organizations Supporting LPNs/LVNs

Below is a list of national and regional organizations that provide support, education, and community for LPNs/LVNs:

- Black Nurses Rock (BNR)
Website: <https://www.blacknursesrock.com>
Welcomes nurses of all license levels and promotes mentorship and advocacy for nurses of color.
- National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (NFLPN)
Website: <https://www.nalpn.org>
Offers professional development, advocacy, and networking for LPNs.
- National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Service (NAPNES)
Website: <https://www.napnes.org>
Focuses on education standards, continuing education, and LPN/LVN certification.
- National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)
Website: <https://www.nbna.org>
While many members are RNs, NBNA includes LPNs and offers a powerful voice in policy and education.
- National League for Nursing (NLN)
Website: www.nln.org/

Promotes excellence in nursing education to build a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the health of our nation and the global community.

- **State-Level LPN Associations**
Many states have local organizations or LPN councils that provide regional education, events, and recognition (e.g., Maryland LPN Association, Texas League for Nursing).

Encouraging LPNs/LVNs to join and lead within these organizations strengthens the profession from the ground up—and helps ensure that all nurses have a voice in shaping the future of healthcare.

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Appendix A. LPN/LVN-to-RN Career Ladder Template.

This table shows both the traditional LPN-to-RN career pathway and the lifelong LPN/LVN pathway.

Stage	Path A – LPN to RN	Path B – Lifelong LPN/LVN
Stage 1	LPN/LVN Entry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete LPN program • Pass NCLEX-PN • Begin employment • Orientation support 	
Stage 2	Mentorship & Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned mentor • Professional development • Nursing org. membership 	
Stage 3	Stage 3A – Bridge Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research/enroll ADN or BSN • Tuition/scholarships • Coursework & clinicals 	Stage 3B – Advanced LPN Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain LPN/LVN • Obtain certifications • Join committees/boards • Quality improvement • Community outreach
Stage 4	RN Licensure Prep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete coursework • RN clinical rotations • Prepare for NCLEX-RN 	
Stage 5	RN Licensure & Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass NCLEX-RN • Transition to RN role • Expanded responsibilities 	Lifelong LPN/LVN Path <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue certifications • Expanded leadership • Community advocacy

Appendix B. Internal Advancement Framework for LPN/LVNs.

Policy Statement

This policy establishes an Internal Advancement Framework for Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses (LPN/LVNs). The framework outlines institutional criteria for recognizing and rewarding LPNs who assume expanded roles such as peer educator, charge nurse, or quality champion. The goal is to promote retention, enhance professional growth, and align individual contributions with organizational excellence.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a transparent, tiered advancement system for LPNs/LVNs. It provides recognition, professional development opportunities, and incentives to those who take on expanded roles within their scope of practice and contribute to the organization's mission and vision.

Scope

This policy applies to all LPN/LVN employees within the organization who meet the eligibility requirements outlined below.

Eligibility

Eligibility for advancement is based on years of experience, demonstrated clinical competence, and contributions to professional development, leadership, and quality improvement. Specific criteria are outlined within each tier.

Advancement Tiers

Tier 1 – Emerging Leader

Role Examples: Preceptor, Peer Educator, Orientation Support

Eligibility Criteria: Minimum 1 year of employment in good standing; Demonstrated clinical competence; Willingness to mentor peers.

Performance Expectations: Assists with onboarding, shares knowledge of policies, models teamwork.

Incentives: Recognition in newsletters/meetings; One paid professional development course; \$500 annual stipend.

Tier 2 – Unit Contributor

Role Examples: Charge Nurse (within scope), Resource Nurse, Committee Member

Eligibility Criteria: 2–3 years' experience; Completion of leadership/supervisory training; Positive peer/supervisor feedback.

Performance Expectations: Supervises daily workflows; Participates in committees/projects; Contributes to quality initiatives.

Incentives: \$1,000 annual stipend or differential; Priority access to continuing education; Recognition in Nurse Leader Spotlight.

Tier 3 – Clinical Champion

Role Examples: Quality Improvement Champion, Safety Officer, Health Equity Advocate

Eligibility Criteria: 4+ years of experience (2 with organization); Specialty certification (preferred); Contributions to patient safety/quality outcomes.

Performance Expectations: Leads/co-leads a quality improvement project; Conducts staff in-services; Serves as liaison to leadership.

Incentives: \$2,000 stipend or recognition differential; Funded conference attendance; Certificate of Recognition.

Tier 4 – Organizational Ambassador

Role Examples: Board Member, Community Health Advocate, Career Ladder Mentor

Eligibility Criteria: 5+ years of practice; Active professional organization membership; Demonstrated workforce advocacy.

Performance Expectations: Represents organization externally; Mentors junior LPNs; Contributes to strategic planning.

Incentives: \$3,000 stipend or equivalent; Paid time off for professional meetings; Recognition at annual awards ceremony.

Implementation & Review

Supervisors will nominate, or LPNs may self-apply for advancement annually. Advancement decisions will be reviewed by the Nursing Leadership Council. Incentives may be adjusted based on budget availability. The framework will be reviewed every two years to ensure continued alignment with organizational priorities.

Internal Advancement Framework Table

This table provides a quick reference to the Internal Advancement Framework. It outlines advancement tiers, performance expectations, and associated incentives for LPNs/LVNs.

Tier & Role Examples	Performance Expectations	Incentives
Tier 1 – Emerging Leader (Preceptor, Peer Educator, Orientation Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist with onboarding - Share policies/best practices - Model teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$500 stipend - Recognition in meetings - One paid course
Tier 2 – Unit Contributor (Charge Nurse, Resource Nurse, Committee Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervise workflows - Serve on committees - Contribute to quality initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$1,000 stipend/differential - Education funding priority - Leadership spotlight
Tier 3 – Clinical Champion (QI Champion, Safety Officer, Health Equity Advocate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead/co-lead QI project - Conduct staff in-services - Act as liaison to leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$2,000 stipend/differential - Funded conference attendance - Certificate of recognition
Tier 4 – Organizational Ambassador (Board Member, Community Advocate, Career Mentor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represent organization externally - Mentor junior LPNs - Contribute to strategic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$3,000 stipend - Paid time off for meetings - Annual awards recognition

Appendix C. LPN/LVN Workforce Retention Survey Template.

Purpose:

This anonymous survey seeks to understand Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses' (LPN/LVN) job satisfaction, work environment, career support, and professional goals. Your responses will help identify ways to strengthen retention, support career growth, and recognize contributions.

Section 1: Demographics (all optional)

1. Age: ☐ Under 25 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55–64 ☐ 65+
2. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Non-binary/Other ☐ Prefer not to say
3. Race (select all that apply): ☐ Black/African American ☐ White ☐ Asian ☐ Native American/Alaska Native ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say
4. Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Non-Hispanic/Latino ☐ Prefer not to say
5. City: _____
6. State: _____
7. Years of practice as an LPN/LVN: ☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1–5 ☐ 6–10 ☐ 11–15 ☐ 16+
8. Current work environment: ☐ Hospital ☐ Long-Term Care/Nursing Home ☐ Home Health ☐ Outpatient/Clinic ☐ School Health ☐ Other: _____
9. Are you a member of a professional nursing organization? ☐ Yes (please specify): _____ ☐ No
10. Do you hold any national certifications? ☐ Yes (please specify): _____ ☐ No
11. Are there additional credentials or certifications you would like to obtain? ☐ Yes (please specify): _____ ☐ No
12. Highest degree obtained: ☐ High School/GED ☐ Diploma/Certificate ☐ Associate Degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐ Doctoral Degree

Section 2: Job Satisfaction & Work Environment

13. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job? ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied
14. Do you feel your contributions are recognized by leadership? ☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
15. What factors most influence your decision to stay in your current role? (select all that apply) ☐ Pay/benefits ☐ Work schedule ☐ Leadership support ☐ Teamwork ☐ Career growth ☐ Workload/staffing levels ☐ Other: _____
16. What are the biggest challenges you face in your work environment?

Section 3: Career Support & Growth

17. Do you feel supported by your employer in your professional development? ☐ Yes, very supported ☐ Somewhat supported ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very supported ☐ Not at all supported
18. Does your organization have a career advancement ladder for LPNs/LVNs? ☐ Yes – I am currently on the ladder ☐ Yes – but I am not on the ladder ☐ No ☐ Not sure
19. What would help you grow in your current role? _____
20. Have you considered returning to school (e.g., RN, BSN, other)? ☐ Yes – currently enrolled ☐ Yes – considering enrollment ☐ No – not interested at this time ☐ No – barriers prevent me (please specify): _____
21. What motivates you to consider further education or advancement?

22. Do you currently serve on any committees, councils, or boards (within your organization or externally)? ☐ Yes (please specify): _____ ☐ No

Section 4: Future Outlook

23. Where do you see your nursing career in the next 3–5 years? ☐ Continuing in current role ☐ Advancing to RN/other degree ☐ Moving into leadership ☐ Leaving nursing ☐ Not sure
24. What would make you more likely to stay in the LPN/LVN workforce long-term?

Closing Note:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Your input is invaluable in shaping programs, policies, and supports that strengthen the LPN/LVN workforce.

Appendix D. Mentorship Application Form.**Contact Information**

Full Name: _____
Credentials/License: _____
Current Role/Title: _____
Employer/Organization: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Background & Experience

Years of Nursing Experience: _____
Practice Area(s)/Specialty: _____
Leadership/Teaching Roles Held: _____
Previous Mentorship Experience: ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, briefly describe: _____

Mentorship Interests

Why do you want to serve as a mentor? _____
Areas you feel strongest in supporting (check all that apply):
☐ Clinical Skills ☐ Leadership ☐ Professional Identity
☐ Career Advancement ☐ Education/Certifications
☐ Quality & Safety ☐ Community Engagement

Commitment Agreement

I am willing to commit to monthly check-ins and program participation.
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E. Mentee Intake Form

Contact Information

Full Name: _____

Credentials/License (if applicable): _____

Current Role/Title: _____

Employer/School: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Professional Background

Years of Nursing Experience (if any): _____

Current Focus/Interest Area(s): _____

Mentorship Goals

What do you hope to gain from mentorship? _____

Specific goals (e.g., NCLEX prep, leadership, career transition, certifications):

Learning Preferences

Preferred communication: ☐ Email ☐ Phone ☐ Video ☐ In-person

Best times to connect: _____

Additional Support Needed

Appendix F. Monthly Check-in Template.

LPN/LVN Mentorship Monthly Check-In

Date

Mentor

Mentee

Month #

Topics Discussed

Progress Toward Goals

Challenges/Barriers Identified

Action Items / Next Steps

Next Meeting Date: _____

Appendix G. Goal-Setting Worksheet.

Name: _____ Date: _____

SMART Goal #1

Specific: _____

Measurable: _____

Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-Bound: _____

Steps to Achieve This Goal:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Resources/Support Needed: _____

Target Completion Date: _____

Appendix H. Evaluation Survey Questions.**Please rate each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)**

1. My mentor/mentee relationship was positive and supportive.
☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
2. The mentorship helped me progress toward my professional goals.
☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
3. Communication between mentor and mentee was effective.
☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
4. I gained new knowledge, skills, or confidence through the program.
☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
5. The program structure (check-ins, forms, goals) supported the mentorship process.
☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Open-Ended Questions

What was the most valuable aspect of the mentorship program? _____

What challenges did you face during the mentorship? _____

Suggestions for improvement: _____

Would you recommend this program to others?