Legislative Policy Brief

A summary of the legislative policy forum held at the 2012 National Emerging Leadership Summit for Long-Term Care Administrators in partnership with the Senate Special Committee on Aging

June 13, 2012
Washington, D.C.

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Special thanks to:
The National Emerging Leadership Summit for Long-Term Care Administrators “Advancing Practices for Raising the Bar for the Senior Care Leaders”
Senate Special Committee on Aging
Legislative Policy Brief

The National Emerging Leadership Summit (NELS) for Long-Term Care Administrators is an annual gathering of young leaders in the field of health and aging services administration to engage in discussions of current best practices, meet with representatives of key professional organizations, gain an inside perspective on the legislative process, and explore solutions for attracting and retaining other young leaders. As part of the third annual NELS, summit participants attended a legislative forum at the United States Senate, where experts and representatives of professional organizations discussed contemporary implications of various aspects of the long-term care administration field. Those present included:

- Anne Montgomery, Senior Policy Advisor, Senate Special Committee on Aging
- Chad Metzler, Senate Special Committee on Aging and staff representative for Senator Herbert Kohl, Chair of the Special Senate Committee on Aging
- Steven Chies, Vice President, Long Term Care Operations, Benedictine Health Systems, American Health Care Association (AHCA)
- Mary Jane Koren, M.D., MPH, Vice President, Long-Term Quality Improvement Program, Commonwealth Fund
- Marianna Kern Grachek, MSN, CNHA, CALA, FACHCA, President and Chief Executive Officer, American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA)
- Randy Lindner, MHSA, CAE, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Long-Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB) and the NAB Foundation
- Wendy Green, Director of Leadership Development, LeadingAge
- Alice Bonner, Ph.D., RN, FAANP, Director, Division of Nursing Homes in the Center for Medicaid, CHIP, and Survey and Certification, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Nicholas Castle, MHA, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Health Policy and Management, University of Pittsburgh
- Robyn Grant, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
- Douglas Olson, NHA, MBA, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and the Center for Health Administration and Aging Services
The panel of experts and practitioners convened to discuss and move forward one of the recommendations made by the 2011 cohort of NELS participants, which addressed the support of the facilitation of standardized state licensure and reciprocity agreements for administrators. Following the welcome by Dr. Robert Burke, Anne Montgomery and Chad Metzler provided supportive comments and some context for the topic being addressed at the forum. The panel then weighed in on the issues and opportunities facing the field of health and aging services administration.

Steven Chies, representing the American Health Care Organization, began testimony with a historical background of attempts to assemble a national database of administrators in the United States, only to be hampered by the variation in state licensure agencies and requirements. Mr. Chies mentioned also using only one state’s database and encountering issues with that attempt. While mentioning inefficiencies in the regulatory model, he noted that further research is being conducted to determine what the necessary qualifications and educational requirements should be for a long-term care administrator. He further supported efforts to look beyond merely education, and uncover what other skills and traits make a highly effective and highly successful administrator.

Dr. Mary Jane Koren, from the Commonwealth Fund began her testimony with the assertion that “quality comes down to leadership.” Dr. Koren highlighted the three vehicles which she felt would help transform the next generation of long-term care leaders: training, administrator-in-training (AIT) programs, and licensure tests. Dr. Koren discussed the work the Fund had been doing to develop new tools for administrators, and emphasized the importance of giving those tools to leaders who could successfully utilize their benefit to successfully implement culture change and person-centered care. Lastly, in addition to requesting Federal government assistance to craft standardized definitions across state boundaries, she discussed the importance of developing effective AIT programs to ensure future leaders have a firm foundation upon which to start a long-term administration career.

Representing the American College of Health Care Administrators, Marianna Kern Grachek echoed Dr. Koren’s statement that leadership matters. Ms. Grachek also emphasized the importance of responding to changing demands the field experiences on a daily basis, including attracting and retaining qualified, competent staff, a process that can take substantial amounts of time and attention. Ms. Grachek discussed the variability in administrator education and training experiences among the states, as well as the lack of portability in an administrator’s license, as two major barriers facing professionals in the long-term care administration field.
She emphasized the importance of standardization of entry-to-practice, continuing practice requirements and certification programs to increase the trust among states and enhance the prestige of the profession.

Randy Lindner, representing the National Association of Long-Term Care Administrator Boards, began by discussing the image problem facing the long-term care administrator profession and the difficulty faced in recruiting talented individuals into the field, including the variation in educational programs and non-funded AIT programs. In addition, Mr. Lindner highlighted the variation in licensure requirements not only for nursing homes, but also in those states that have or are in the process of creating licensure requirements for other forms of long-term care (e.g., assisted living). He discussed a practice analysis and accompanying research NAB would be undertaking to look for core competencies across the continuum of long-term care services, which would lead toward the development of a “super credential,” to help transcend state boundaries and state variations, and also allow for standardization in educational programs.

Wendy Green, of LeadingAge, lauded the panel’s recommendation to create leadership development opportunities for emerging leaders in the long-term care administration field. Representatives from her organization, when polled, said that the void of emerging, next-generation leaders caused them distress when considering the longevity of the field. Ms. Green highlighted the Leadership Academy developed by LeadingAge, which helps individuals in this field to move the field forward, to embrace uncertainty, and see opportunity in challenge, which ultimately benefits residents and clients served each day. She encouraged members of the field to seek out these types of programs to enhance leadership skills and to advance the field for the next generation.

Dr. Nicholas Castle, faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, highlighted the research he and other scholars have conducted within the field of long-term care administration. Discussing the amount of data analyzed over the years, Dr. Castle explained the significant relationship of nursing home administration on important issues such as staff turnover, quality of care, satisfaction, safety, and quality of life for residents. He also elaborated on administrator qualifications that improve the care delivered to residents, and emphasized the importance of level and quality of education and effective AIT programs to improve quality of care and life.

Dr. Alice Bonner, from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), explained in detail that the regulation creation and change processes are very involved, and rely heavily upon the experience and input of administrators in the field. Dr. Bonner encouraged the panel, as well as the NELS participants, to discuss their ideas to CMS during regulation creation and modification, and to work with CMS to develop policy utilizing real-world experiences and noting roadblocks to craft savvy regulations.
From the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, Robyn Grant spoke about the consumer perspective regarding quality long-term care administrators. As part of AIT programs, Ms. Grant relayed commentary from her members about the importance to them of spending time in various staff positions within a facility as well as spending time receiving care as a resident would. Ms. Grant also emphasized qualities residents and their family members value in an administrator, such as attentive listening and the willingness to address challenges within a community, along with maintaining a presence throughout the community and pitching in to help to model teamwork and appropriate behavior expected from all staff.

As the concluding speaker, Dr. Douglas Olson, from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, emphasized and echoed comments from other panel members regarding the importance of standardizing requirements for administrator licensure and developing continuity in educational programs across the country. Dr. Olson highlighted the various aspects of the administrator program at his University, including the educational requirements and the wide scope of experience students get in the AIT program. One of the best practices he commented on was that their students receive a stipend for their field experience, rather than asking them to be engaged in this effort for a year without pay. He also highlighted research conducted into the quality and depth of AIT programs and the requisite qualifications for preceptors of AIT programs. Dr. Olson concluded by summarizing the panel’s recommendations:

- the standardization of licensure, to allow the field to focus on better approaches and models of training, and allow for greater portability of licensure;
- that, based on preliminary and strong evidence, the optimal and appropriate level of education and field experience for an administrator can be determined;
- a valuable field experience allows the student in an AIT program to focus their attention on professional growth and development needed to engage in the profession, and that the student be funded during their field experience; and
- raising the image of a health and aging services administrator is an important issue to address, requiring the recruitment of a variety of stakeholders to assist in this endeavor.

The above recommendations reflect the general consensus and support of the entire panelist group representing a wide variety of key stakeholder organizations involved in the delivery and improvement of senior care in this country.

The panel concluded the policy forum by fielding questions from the audience and NELS participants to ascertain insights and concerns from the emerging leaders in the long-term care administration field. Several ideas to address and implement the expert panel’s recommendations were discussed, and all panel members committed to work in the months ahead to achieve progress on each recommendation highlighted during the policy forum.
Any correspondence regarding this legislative policy brief, its recommendations, or the 2012 NELS Summit, should be sent directly to Dr. Douglas Olson, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, at olsondou@uwec.edu. For further information on the 2012 NELS summit, please visit: http://www.gwumc.edu/ltcsummit. The efforts of Kevin Hansen, JD, a doctoral student from University South Florida are appreciated as a designated NELS scholar this year.