



2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit



American
Nurses
Enterprise



Breaking Barriers Through Policy: Fostering Collaboration and Opportunity to Impact Patient Outcomes

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Objectives

- Explain how health system policies influence structural barriers and health outcomes for patients and families.
- Apply an equity lens to health system policy development to identify and mitigate barriers for marginalized populations.
- Identify actionable steps for creating enabling infrastructure that supports patients, families, and caregivers



Common Policy Definitions

- Big P – Public or governmental policies
- Little P - private or nongovernmental policies

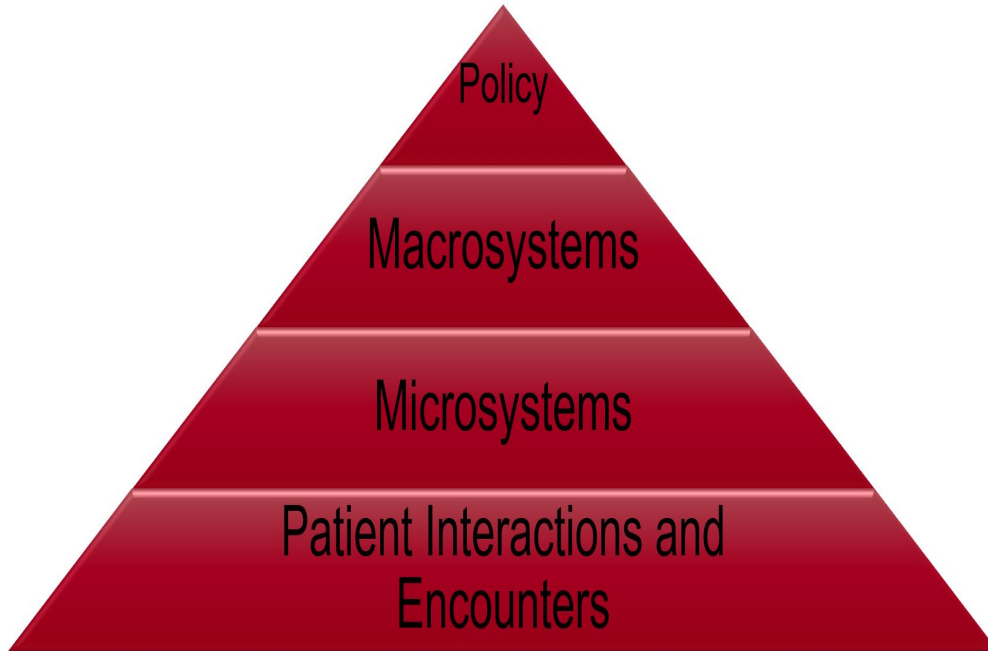
Sample Health System Policy Definition

Policy – A mandatory, high level overall standard to establish a course of action toward organization and/or enterprise-wide accepted strategies.

1. System-applies to all entities
2. Entity-Specific – applies to multiple departments within an entity
3. Department – applies to a single department or an institute



Why Should We Care About Policy?





Removing Barriers in Clinical Policies: Patient Rights Exemplar

Patients have the right to:

- Be informed of their rights
- Participate in care decisions
- Make informed decisions
- Formulate advance directives
- Privacy, safety, and dignified care
- Confidentiality of medical information
- File grievances and receive resolutions
- Control visitation

All are mandated under 42 CFR §482.13



Contemporary Issues in Patient Visitation Policies

- Restrictive Visitation Language & Criminal-History–Based Exclusions
- Lessons From COVID-19: Harsh Restrictions & Long-Term Harms
- Communication Barriers & Cognitive Harms
- Workplace Violence & Safety-Driven Limitations



National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing

Key Themes: Affirmative Themes Policy

1. Equity and justice can be perpetuated through the systemic and structural nature of policy.
2. The application and implementation of any policy are equitably administered as measured by equal outcomes across groups.
3. Diversity of people and thought, plus the equitable inclusion of all stakeholders, will broaden the policymaking lens and support the development of anti-racist policies.

<https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/workforce/racism-in-nursing/national-commission-to-address-racism-in-nursing/commissions-foundational-report-on-racism--in-nursing/>



Policy Through and Equity Lens

- Are your organization's values reflected in your policies?
- How can you improve?
- Who does this policy serve?
- Who is not served?
- Whose voices contributed to the policy?
- Whose voices are missing?
- Who has the power?
- Can it be distributed?

"Nurses are often the first to recognize when policies work and when they do not work." - Gentry & Fisher-Grace, 2026

Thank You

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