



# ON THE FRONT LINES

Coronavirus Response Fund for Nurses

**IMPACT REPORT**

AUG | 2021

 AMERICAN NURSES  
FOUNDATION

**Despite feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, 85% of nurses say they do not plan to leave the nursing profession and 60% plan to remain in their current positions.**

—Year One COVID-19  
Impact Assessment Survey, February 2021

**Just 18 months ago**, our nation’s nurses confronted the greatest challenge of their careers as the COVID-19 pandemic overloaded our health care system and tore through our communities. Nurses served on the front lines, providing critical, highly skilled care while simultaneously being the emotional core in hospitals across the country.

For the nation’s nurses, 2020 was both the “[Year of the Nurse](#)” and a year of action. They developed innovative solutions to deploy lifesaving treatments to COVID-19 patients, participated in clinical trials to advance COVID-19 vaccine development, advocated for their patients and social justice issues, and confronted long-standing health inequities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Though nurses received an outpouring of appreciation from the media and their communities, their mental, emotional, physical, and financial well-being suffered as they bore the weight of this health crisis. The American Nurses Foundation (the Foundation) created the [Coronavirus Response Fund for Nurses](#) to provide the support nurses so desperately need during this time.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved, so have nurses’ needs. Beyond providing immediate critical relief, we are preparing for a time of recovery and providing deeper support and healing for nurses as they process the full impact of all they risked and lost during the pandemic. We also are preparing to rebuild, recognizing the reality the COVID-19 pandemic revealed—existing systems and infrastructure are insufficient to support nurses properly in their immensely stressful roles. Caring for nurses in this way translates back into exemplary care for patients since it increases nurses’ capacity to pour themselves into their absolutely critical work. Healthier nurses lead to healthier communities.

**IN THIS IMPACT REPORT,  
WE SHOWCASE OUR PROGRESS IN FIVE CORE AREAS:**

- 1 COVID-19 Survey Series**
- 2 Mental Health Support**
- 3 Direct Financial Aid**
- 4 Education and Evidence-based Information**
- 5 Advocacy**



**Lindsey's Story**

“At the beginning of March 2020, before the whole world understood the severity of this pandemic, my hospital got its first suspected COVID-19 patient. By the end of the week, our entire 46-bed unit was 100% ‘COVID-19 only.’ We were the first unit designated ‘COVID-19 only’ at our hospital and 15 months later we still are admitting ‘COVID-19 only.’

We were never asked if we wanted to work directly on the front lines, if we were comfortable with it, or if we wanted to transfer units.

At this point, I'm burnt out. No words or stories can describe the horrors and devastation the front line workers have seen this year.

The American Nurses Foundation grant offered me a much-needed breather. I was able to take a break from over-time shifts and enjoy my family. To be honest, I wish we all could still be here to enjoy our families.”

- Lindsey H.

**COVID-19 SURVEY SERIES**

Our survey series, [Pulse on the Nation's Nurses](#), allowed us to gather information directly from nurses to develop our impactful, nurse-driven [COVID-19 programming](#). We surveyed more than 100,000 nurses nationwide on critical topics related to the pandemic and their responses to it, helping us understand the specific needs of nurses on the front lines and enabling us to develop solutions best suited to their unique issues. The series included the following:

▶ **[Mental Health and Wellness Survey 1 and Survey 2](#)**

These surveys, conducted at the onset of the pandemic and six months later, focused on the pandemic's mental and emotional impact on nurses. The surveys found that many of the struggles faced by nurses not only persisted, but intensified. The combined results from nearly 24,000 nurses informed the development and expansion of our [Well-Being Initiative](#).

▶ **[Financial Impact Survey](#)**

This survey focused on the financial hardships experienced by nurses during the pandemic. More than 10,000 nurses responded citing struggles around meeting their basic financial needs, leading us to launch our [direct financial aid initiative](#).

▶ **[Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Survey](#)**

The results of this survey highlighted nurses' concerns around availability, reuse, decontamination, and accessibility of PPE in all health care settings throughout the pandemic and revealed that conditions remained extremely unsafe for nurses.

▶ **[Vaccine Survey](#)**

This survey provided a critical snapshot of nurses' concerns about vaccine education, development, and management.

▶ **[Family Presence and Visitation During COVID-19 Survey](#)**

This survey focused on how family presence restrictions impacted patient care and nurses' well-being.

▶ **[Innovation Survey](#)**

This survey focused on how nurses' resourcefulness and creativity identified new ways to care for patients.

In February 2021, we completed our [Year One COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey](#) to gauge how nurses' overall mental health and well-being, financial, and professional needs evolved during the pandemic's first 12 months. More than 22,300 nurses responded. Findings from the Year One COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey appear throughout this report.

**Edward's Story**

“I'm an ICU Nurse and I tested positive for COVID-19 on March 14, 2020. To be honest, the trauma of contracting COVID-19 feels like it will stay with me forever. Luckily, I have a supportive network of family and friends to hold me up when I find myself dwelling on those terribly dark times.

These days, my skills and expertise are invaluable and essential every day of this crisis. They get me back to the bedside to care for extremely ill COVID-19 patients.

Thank you to the American Nurses Foundation and Johnson & Johnson for your generous grant. It's more than a financial gift. It means everything to me just knowing that someone cares enough to take care of those of us who are suffering on the front line.”

- Edward L., ICU Nurse

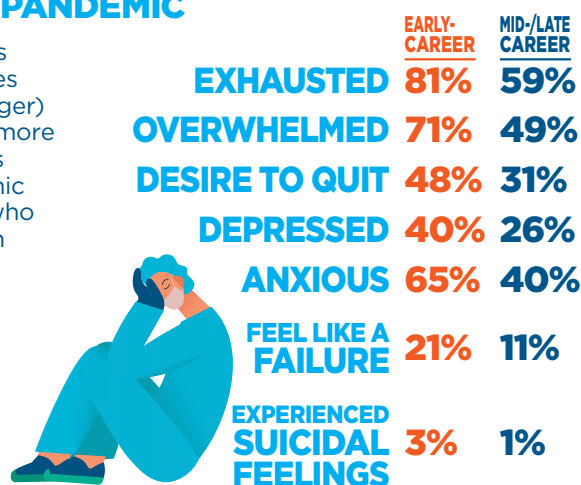
**MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT**

Every day, across the nation, millions of nurses experience extraordinary stress and other impacts to their mental health and well-being as the pandemic continues. Our [Well-Being Initiative](#), guided by our national Mental Well-Being Advisory Group of clinicians and researchers, offers resources that care for nurses as they tirelessly care for others. We created these programs in collaboration with the American Nurses Association, American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, American Psychiatric Nurses Association, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses, and Emergency Nurses Association, and provided each group with grants to enhance their particular support for nurses during the pandemic.

The tools and support are free and available to all nurses regardless of specialty, membership, geography, or whether they treat COVID-19 patients. These resources are varied, multi-tiered, and comprehensive because nurses have differing needs and points of access. The collection includes our [Nurses' Guide to Mental Health Support Services](#), which outlines what nurses need to know and do to locate the mental health support that is right for them. We also created infographics and other tools focused on [ending shifts](#), [returning home safely](#), [improving sleep quality](#), [preventing and recognizing PTSD](#), and supporting nurses' overall health and well-being. To date, nearly **110,000 nurses have participated in our programs.**

**NURSES' FEELINGS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Early-career nurses (those who are ages 34 years and younger) have experienced more distressing feelings during the pandemic than have nurses who are further along in their careers.



Source: Year One COVID-19 Impact Assessment Survey, February 2021

**MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT** (continued)

For example, more than 400 nurses have benefitted from our [Narrative Expressive Writing Program](#), a five-week guided program in which participants respond anonymously to weekly prompts. Trained professionals then review the submissions and respond to each participant. At the start of the program, participants had an average perceived stress level of 66.5 (on a 100-point scale, with 100 being worst stress ever). After the five-week program, nurses reported an 11% improvement, with the average perceived stress level decreased to 55.6. (See “Well-Being Initiative Resources: By the Numbers” for additional program impacts.)

In addition to supporting nurses directly, we have collaborated with multiple health care associations and organizations to expand access to mental health and well-being resources for nurses. For instance, we partnered with Arizona Nurses Association to pilot an eight-week, 16-message text message program. The messages provided resources and support to alleviate nurse burnout and secondary trauma and to promote well-being by informing frontline nurses about available assistance. Among the pilot’s survey respondents, 87% found the text responses useful or very useful to their well-being. We since have expanded the pilot into a national campaign launched in 16 additional states.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, more than 200 nurses participated in the 10 three-part workshops focused on compassion and growth that we delivered in November 2020 with Emory Healthcare. In the three months following the initial round of workshops, 81% of survey respondents said they continued to practice skills they learned during the sessions.

We also collaborated with Planetree International to develop the [Family Presence Policy Decision-Making Toolkit](#) to equip nurses with tools to incorporate family presence safely into their COVID-19 care plans. Thirty-three organizations<sup>2</sup> endorsed the toolkit, which were piloted in rural and urban institutions for acute and long-term care and released globally in May 2021.

We also launched the [Gratitude Practice for Nurses](#) campaign with the Greater Good Science Center at University of California at Berkeley. This program supports nurses in caring for their own health and well-being by drawing on the decades of research that shows practicing gratitude is good for mind, body, and relationships. The program will continue through 2021 with a goal of engaging thousands of nurses through toolkits, gratitude challenges, articles, and a community of practice.

**WELL-BEING INITIATIVE RESOURCES:  
 BY THE NUMBERS**  
 As of July 2021, more than...

**2,000 NURSES USE HAPPY**  
 an app that provides free, 24/7, one-on-one conversations with an emotional support team member.

**4,000 NURSES HAVE COMPLETED OUR STRESS SELF-ASSESSMENT**  
 and received a nurse-curated list of resources to address their stress levels in real time.

**8,300 NURSES USE MOODFIT**  
 an app that allows nurses to set wellness goals and track progress for exercise, nutrition, sleep, and mindfulness.

**21,000 LISTENS OF A NURSING STATE OF MIND**  
 our podcast series developed with the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses that covers topics related to work and personal well-being.

**80,000+ VIEWS**  
 of our mental health webinars and videos.

<sup>1</sup> States included: Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming

<sup>2</sup> Toolkit endorsed by Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, AHCA/NCAL - American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living, American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, American Holistic Nurses Association, American Nurses Foundation, American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL), American Psychiatric Nurses Association, Connecticut Center for Patient Safety, Enloe Medical Center, Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA), Griffin Health, International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals & Health Services, International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua), Joint Commission International, Language of Caring, Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety, Mothers Against Medical Errors, National Association of Indian Nurses of America, NYC Health + Hospitals, Northwell Health, Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) of the NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, Pioneer Network, Planetree Brasil, Planetree América Latina, Planetree Netherlands, Réseau Planetree Francophone, Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center, Sociedade Beneficente Israelita Brasileira Albert Einstein, The American College of Health Care Administrators, The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, The John A. Hartford Foundation, The Joint Commission, The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT (continued)

Meanwhile, the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association received a Foundation grant to create a series of five video vignettes to help professional caregivers support patients and their significant others who are grieving. Similarly, with our support the DAISY Foundation developed and implemented a new online platform that allows patients and families to nominate extraordinary nurses for its national award program.

We have committed to advancing nurses' well-being and mental health for the long term because we know that many of the issues nurses currently face existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. While they are heightened now, these issues will continue into the future, so we are prepared to support them.

### DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

While many nurses have faced work challenges like shortages of PPE and staffing and the mental stress of caring for COVID-19 patients, others have faced furloughs, lost wages from contracting COVID-19, or unpaid time off to care for a sick family member. To alleviate this financial strain on nurses, we provided a total of \$2.6 million to our partner Nurses House to provide direct financial assistance to U.S. registered nurses (RNs). To date, these personal support grants have helped more than 2,000 nurses across 45 states.

For the most recent \$250,000 of these funds, we earmarked \$100,000 specifically for nurses of color, who have experienced greater financial hardships during the pandemic than their white counterparts. We also designated \$75,000 specifically for nurses in long-term care, hospice, and home care work, and the remaining \$75,000 for RNs with no restriction.

Additionally, we partnered with the Foundation for Financial Planning and Edelman Financial Engines to provide free financial planning for nurses. The 15 Edelman financial planners provided three counseling sessions to two nurses each.

#### Sahskia's Story

“The funding from the American Nurses Foundation has helped tremendously. Like many people, I missed work because a family member was diagnosed with COVID-19. The funding enabled me to transition back to work with a lot more ease.

I'm grateful for the American Nurses Foundation. I think a lot of people have realized that we (nurses) deserve a lot more credit than we've gotten in the past. We truly are first responders and I'm grateful that there is help out here specifically for nurses because, honestly, sometimes I feel that we're unappreciated.

What people don't see is what happens behind the scenes of those of us on the front lines. We're like everyone else—some of us continued to work, some of us lost our jobs, and some of us were impacted directly by COVID-19.

Thank you, American Nurses Foundation. I don't know how to even begin to express how much gratitude I feel. This means more than you know. ”

– Sahskia C., RN



#### FAMILY FINANCES AND CONCERNS OUTSIDE WORK:

**41% FINANCE/DEBT A TOP CONCERN**  
**19% FINANCIALLY WORSE-OFF NOW**

**Jerome's Story**

“I was one of the firsts. Working as a nurse in Las Vegas, NV, I contracted COVID-19 during March 2020. I am also a long-hauler. In fact, I've never gotten to care for a COVID-19 patient because I haven't been able to return to work.

Being a long-hauler is difficult on its own. However, my condition feels even worse because of the financial difficulties I've experienced since contracting COVID-19. The workers' comp benefits provided by my employer weren't much help at all. In fact, I'm still fighting to receive care and treatments from a neurologist and a cardiologist. Not being able to return to work meant that my health benefits expired. I am now living on Medicaid and receiving food stamps. My car has been repossessed. To make matters worse, I am unable to collect unemployment benefits because I was discharged by my employer due to medical reasons. To say that COVID-19 has made life difficult is an understatement. I'm struggling.

The American Nurses Foundation has been a lifesaver. With this grant, I was able to pay for six months of my property taxes. However, I'm still worried. I have a son now, born in November 2020. My wife is a CNA and she's the one supporting us. I don't know how we're getting by, but I'm hoping that somehow we can give my son a better future than what we have presently.

I'm incredibly grateful for the help from the American Nurses Foundation and I'm looking forward to a time when this is finally past us.”

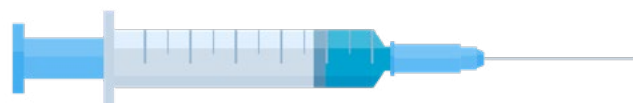
- Jerome M.

**EDUCATION AND EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION**

Throughout the pandemic, information regarding treatment, care, and impact has shifted constantly as our nation's scientists and health care professionals learn more about this new virus. Our resources keep nurses up-to-date with the latest data-informed practices and equip them to provide effective care during this crisis.

We provided a grant to the ANA for a [series of hour-long webinars](#) that provide comprehensive information about ventilator management, ethical challenges, racial disparities in COVID-19, ambulatory care, disease progression, vaccines, PPE, and mental health. Combined, the webinars have received more than 244,000 views. Meanwhile, the [short-form videos](#) offer nurses on-demand training in five- to 15-minute segments. The videos have received more than 300,000 views and continue to attract thousands of nurses each week.

Additionally, with funding from Johnson & Johnson we partnered with ANA to launch the [COVID Vaccine Facts 4 Nurses](#) campaign. As a part of this outreach, we provided grants to nursing and non-nursing organizations to offer vaccine education in their communities.



**73% NURSES HAVE ADEQUATE PPE**

**88% NURSES RECEIVED A COVID-19 VACCINE\***

\* July 2021 COVID Vaccine Facts For Nurses survey



**Durga's Story**

“In March 2020, we were not prepared for what we were about to face. It was a panic situation. News of COVID-19 was everywhere, but no one seemed to know how to treat it and it was taking us down quickly. Most of my coworkers tested positive for COVID-19 and had to quarantine. That meant we all had to step up. I often worked 16-hour shifts to cover staff shortages because so many of us were getting sick.

Shortages on staff created shortages for care. We were often down to one nurse for 30 patients. It was a heavy workload and I often found myself crying. I often felt like there was nothing I could do to help my patients as they were dying. It was very traumatic for the families as they were not able to see their loved ones while they were being treated.

I am so thankful for the support of the American Nurses Foundation. They offer much needed motivation to us on the front lines. I know that they appreciate my work every day.”

- Durga G.

**WHAT WOULD MAKE NURSES FEEL BETTER PREPARED?**

**74% NURSES SAY CONSISTENT & BETTER EXECUTED NATIONAL HEALTH POLICIES & PUBLIC INTERVENTION PLANS**

**ADVOCACY**

Nurses want—and deserve—a seat at the table when it comes to national health policies and plans for future public health crises.

During the course of the pandemic, we advocated on nurses' behalf to the U.S. Congress and used our survey data to inform federal agencies' COVID-19 response planning. Staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and U.S. Government Accountability Office requested and used data from our PPE, mental health, vaccine, and impact assessment surveys to inform their work and strategic decision-making.

Additionally, the Tri-Council for Nursing (American Nurses Association, American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Organization for Nursing Leadership, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and the National League for Nursing) used our grant funding to convene nurses across care settings and functional levels in a virtual summit to create an advocacy blueprint for post-COVID nursing issues. The summit identified six themes as essential to the future of nursing education, practice, and regulation: (1) equity and health equity, (2) ethics, (3) innovation, (4) interprofessional emergency planning and response, (5) mental health and well-being, and (6) nursing workforce.





## OUR GENEROUS DONORS

This programming would not be possible without the quick action and generous gifts from our many donors. In addition to thousands of individual donors, as well as a wide range of companies and groups, the following donors made contributions ranging from \$50,000 to \$2 million.

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*UnitedHealth Group*

*United Health Foundation*

*CeraVe*

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*Vera Bradley*

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### Loren's Story

“Working in the ER, I've seen my fair share of difficult situations, but I've never seen anything like COVID-19 and I hope to never see anything like it again.

During the past year, I've seen so many people come through our doors looking for help only to find us short staffed and exhausted. I've watched patients struggle to take even one breath. I've helped patients FaceTime their families to say goodbye before getting intubated. I've watched the bodies of the people who did not survive COVID-19 pile up on top of each other in refrigerated containers.

I struggle to leave it all behind. I am so scared of taking this disease home to my family. I am my family's sole financial support. I don't even want to think about what would happen to them if something happens to me.

Unfortunately, I got COVID-19 and the only thing I could think about was staying alive to make sure my family would be okay. Luckily, I survived and only had some medical bills to show for it. Thankfully, the American Nurses Foundation fund was there to help me pay those bills.

I'm still showing up to work at the ER. There is still so much to be done. All I ask is that you take this seriously. You don't want to see what I've seen.”

- Loren M., Emergency Room Nurse

