

Frequently Asked Questions

American Nurses Association Racial Reckoning Statement

(As of 4/28/2022)

Racism: Assaults on the human spirit in the form of actions, biases, prejudices, and an ideology of superiority based on race that persistently cause moral suffering and physical harm of individuals and perpetuate systemic injustices and inequities.

(National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing, 2021)

OVERVIEW

In 2021, the American Nurses Association (ANA) began an intense effort to understand its own history in relation to racism in nursing. The outcome of this examination is an initial reckoning statement that serves as an apology to nurses of color who have been harmed by decisions and omissions made by ANA that contributed to racism in the profession. With this statement, ANA is launching a sustained effort dedicated to ongoing reckoning and reconciliation.

Please use the Frequently Asked Questions included in this document when speaking with Membership Assembly attendees, association members, partners, and other stakeholders about this statement and ANA's ongoing work.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of “racial reckoning”?

For ANA, the purpose of racial reckoning is to create a space for us to examine our past actions, behaviors and policies that contributed to marginalizing and harming nurses based on their race and ethnicity. The “reckoning” aspect involves acknowledging past harms, apologizing and seeking forgiveness, and establishing accountability so that these behaviors, actions, and policies will never occur again.

Why is ANA spending so much time on this when there are other issues impacting the nursing profession, such as staffing and workplace violence?

Great leaders acknowledge and own mistakes and harm whether intentional or unintentional. A necessary part of healing and future actions is asking for forgiveness which ANA speaks to in the

statement. ANA strongly believes that this issue must be addressed along with the many others that impact the profession. The evidence is quite clear from the literature, surveys, and listening sessions that racism is negatively impacting not only our nursing colleagues of color, but also the profession and our ability to safely care for all patients. Issue such as staffing, and workplace violence are directly impacted by racism – it uniquely affects every aspect of the profession. By working to alleviate the harms of racism, workplace violence and staffing will be positively impacted. ANA’s mission is to lead the profession to shape the future of nursing and health care. Addressing racism must be at the foundation of our mission along with the many other issues that ANA and the profession are dealing with.

Why is ANA considering this racial reckoning statement now?

With the establishment of the National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing, ANA leadership realized that we as an association needed to intentionally look at our own history and make amends. This is necessary to support our credibility in speaking about the impact of racism in nursing today. ANA recognizes that we are late in offering this public acknowledgement, but the ANA leadership is fully committed to apologizing to communities of color for our past actions that contributed to furthering racism in the nursing profession, while also laying a plan for moving forward.

How does this statement relate to the [National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing](#)?

The focus of the Commission which launched on January 25, 2021, with leading ethnic and minority nursing organizations, is to examine the issue of racism within nursing nationwide and within the broader profession. ***This racial reckoning statement is exclusively the work of ANA and is focused on our organizational history.*** ANA’s involvement in both aspects of this work is necessary because we hold accountabilities at both the organizational and professional levels to address the issue of racism in nursing. While data gathered from the Commission’s work informed ANA’s need and urgency to reckon with our history, the reckoning statement is not a work product of the Commission.

What is ANA’s goal for this effort?

The goal is to recognize the harm that we have caused from past actions while also seeking forgiveness. In addition, ANA is striving for a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable professional organization. These basic and foundational principles are nonnegotiable to meet the needs of all nurses and people.

Why is Membership Assembly considering ANA’s racial reckoning statement?

While the ANA board of directors is leading this effort; we recognize that Membership Assembly is ANA’s highest policy making body. Therefore, a statement of this significance should be considered by the Membership Assembly.

What does this mean for the State Nurses Associations and the Individual Member Division?

ANA’s racial reckoning statement focuses on ANA’s history at the national level. There are references to actions taken or not taken by the state nurses associations, but it is up to each state to determine its own course of action regarding their own history and strategies for moving forward. ANA urges the state nurses association to engage in similar efforts and we stand ready to provide guidance and support to those that choose to initiate such an effort.

What about the American Nurses Foundation, American Academy of Nursing, and the American Nurses Credentialing Center?

This statement only reflects the American Nurses Association, the oldest entity within the ANA Enterprise. Each of the other organizations can engage in their own internal discussion to consider whether such a statement is warranted given their own past actions.

Who are we referring to when ANA uses the term “nurses of color”?

ANA has chosen to use the term “nurses of color” to reflect all nurses representing minoritized racial, ethnic, and Indigenous groups. It is ANA’s intention to be fully inclusive in the use of this term.

Why does this statement focus on racism and does not reference other forms of discrimination?

ANA is fully aware that there are other forms of discrimination (e.g., age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, etc.). However, history and the overall pervasiveness of racism within our country and nursing calls on us to act. ANA’s hope is that as we address racism in nursing there will be a positive impact on all other forms of discrimination.

Why does the statement not include any of the good things that ANA has done?

The purpose of this statement is for ANA to fully own its past actions that contributed to racism within the profession with emphasis upon the physical and mental harm that was done to our colleagues of color. It is about acknowledging when we failed to live up to the professional values established through the historical and current versions of the Code of Ethics for Nurses. This statement also recognizes when we failed to lead as the professional association for nurses.

Why does the language in the statement rely so heavily on terms such as “forgiveness” and “healing”?

ANA was intentional in the use of this language to reflect the deep sincerity of this statement and to honor the understanding that our actions caused irreparable physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic harm not only to our colleagues of color, but also to their communities and multiple generations that followed.

What does ANA mean when it says that racism continues today within nursing?

Through the work of the Commission, ANA knows that racism continues within the profession. This is clear through the countless stories and experiences shared during the [listening sessions](#) held in Spring 2021, and in the findings from the Commission’s 2021 [national survey](#). The words of our colleagues of color speak of ongoing racial discrimination and harm that they face in nursing education, practice, policy, and research.

Is ANA planning to make any reparations?

ANA recognizes that this statement does not reflect the experiences of all the racial, ethnic, and Indigenous groups within the US. Therefore, ANA plans to actively engage with leading ethnic-minority and Indigenous nurse associations so that we can more fully understand and acknowledge how our actions impacted the nurses that they represent. Through this process, ANA expects to acknowledge and reconcile specific harms and develop a mutually acceptable action plan moving forward. The statement includes other actions that ANA plans to undertake including continued active support for the Commission and the launch of an oral history project that broadens and creates a more inclusive history.

What does this mean for individual nurses, state nurses associations, individual member division and organizational affiliates moving forward?

ANA recognizes that this is important necessary work that we as leaders of the association and within the profession must undertake. ANA also invites every nurse and other nursing organizations, to engage with us on this journey of reckoning and reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing, to strengthen who we are as a professional association and within the broader nursing profession, as we strive to advance antiracist nursing practices and environments.