

# PA AWHONN SPRING NEWSLETTER



Last month, the CDC (2023) released 2021 provisional data on maternal mortality which revealed a staggering increase in maternal deaths during COVID, with over 1200 women dying in 2021. There are sobering disparities in maternal mortality with Black Non-Hispanic women dying at 2.6 times the rate of non-Hispanic White Women (CDC, 2023). Outside of COVID-19, several factors are reported to have influenced the increase in maternal mortality and the widening disparities including implicit bias and racism, lack of access to quality care, social determinants, and increasing rates of comorbidities such as diabetes and/or chronic hypertension among childbearing women (CDC, 2023). This data is saddening. As nurses and maternal health advocates, it is integral that we continue to do our part towards making a change and continue to reflect on what we can do to improve outcomes for the birthing people and babies for whom we care. April 11-17th is Black Maternal Health Week. In support of Black Maternal Health Week and every week, we must continue to take action towards eliminating preventable maternal mortality and disparities in outcomes. A few things we can do

- **Stay informed and garner new perspectives**—consider checking out Twitter and LinkedIn—and follow maternal health organizations, health care journals, perinatal equity organizations and leaders in Black Maternal Health to get timely and easy access to information and articles on maternal health equity.
- **Provide trauma-informed and respectful maternity care**—check out AWHONN’s respectful maternity care bundle, support its implementation and attend our presentation with Rose Horton in May!
- **Listen thoughtfully to the patients and families you serve.**
- **Promote access to doula care and work collaboratively with doulas at your site.**
- **Review all cases of severe maternal morbidity** for opportunity for prevention, process improvement and assess for the impact of racism, bias and social determinants.
- **Analyze your perinatal and neonatal process and outcome data by race, ethnicity, and language to assess for disparities and opportunities to improve.**
- **Ask questions to better understand** and respond to any concerns your patients may have.
- Provide all pregnant and postpartum patients with culturally and linguistically appropriate **education on urgent maternal warning signs.**
- **Invite community members to the table** --create patient and family advisory councils which represent the communities you serve.
- **Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test** (Project Implicit ([harvard.edu](http://harvard.edu)) in an effort to recognize, reflect on and eliminate unconscious bias.
- **Raise awareness** and promote Black Maternal Health Week and perinatal health equity on your units and among your colleagues here are a few resources.
  - 2023 Black Maternal Health Week - Black Mamas Matter Alliance
  - Black Maternal Health Week 2023 - National Birth Equity Collaborative
  - Birth Equity - AWHONN
  - Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality | Health Equity Features | CDC
  - BIRTHING JUSTICE | Documentary Film
  - Aftershock | Documentary Film ([aftershockdocumentary.com](http://aftershockdocumentary.com))



# UPCOMING SECTION EVENT



The **PA AWHONN Virtual Spring Conference** will take place on May 11th. **Rose L. Horton RN, FAAN** will be presenting on implementing AWHONN's respectful maternity care bundle. The presentation will be from 6:30-7:30 pm, followed by games, chapter updates, and networking. The event is free to members and ten dollars for nonmembers, Students are free!

**Implementing AWHONN's Respectful Maternity Care Bundle**

*Register today!*

**Virtual Spring Conference**  
**Thursday, May 11, 2023**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Conference Presentation  
7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. PA Section & Chapter Updates, Networking, Games

**AWHONN PENNSYLVANIA**  
PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND NEWBORNS

This activity has been submitted to the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association for approval to award contact hours. The Pennsylvania State Nurses Association is accredited as an approver of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Presented by:  
**Rose L. Horton, MSM, RNC-OB, NEA-BC, FAAN**

**Registration:**  
Scan QR Code or click on photo above

- AWHONN Members: Free
- Non-members: \$10.00

**Create a watch party with your colleagues or at your facility and join as a group!**

# AWHONN CONFERENCE 2023



Registration is open for this years AWHONN national convention in New Orleans, Louisiana June 17-21, 2023. The theme is 'Are you ready for what's next?' A meet and greet will be planned for the conference as well--Please RSVP for the meet and greet via the link the email. To register and find out more <https://www.awhonnonvention.org/>

# LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The legislative committee is up and getting started. We have volunteers from across the state giving us good representation from all regions. Gerri Maurer has completed the committee orientation from National AWHONN and will be attending AWHONN on Capitol Hill in April. The first committee meeting is tentatively planned for Tuesday May 16 via zoom. During this meeting, they will discuss committee development, orientation for committee members, and preparation for the conference in NOLA. There is a National committee that establishes position statements and procedures. We will be reviewing those and planning our next steps along the national guidelines. More news to follow.



Led by the Legislative Coordinator Gerri Maurer

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2023



AWHONN held its second in-person Leadership Development Conference (LDC) since COVID in Long Beach, CA the weekend of January 20 – 22, 2023. Designed as a volunteer development and networking conference, the LDC held informative sessions to provide section leaders with the latest information about how to serve our local members best! Several section Leaders on our section planning board had the opportunity to attend and bring back information to benefit local chapters in Pennsylvania.

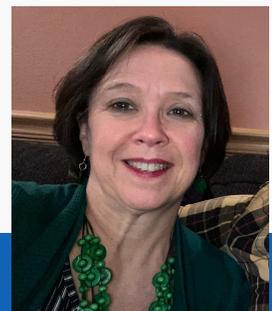
Attendees had the opportunity to meet in person with AWHONN leaders, including the President and CEO of AWHONN! An informative panel discussion was held that outlined the responsibilities that all nurses in perinatal, newborn, and women’s health nursing have as leaders in the industry.

Several sections across the US presented information about strategies and events that were successful in their areas; information that we can use to serve our PA members! Sessions also included topics on member engagement, the intergenerational workforce, and using social media to our advantage! Attendees also had the ability to network and form meaningful connections with their peers and the Section Advisory Board members across the US.

The sessions with the most impact centered on the continuing work that AWHONN is doing to decrease maternal mortality: those focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. As nurses serving women and children, we all want the best care for our patients that result in the best outcomes. Providing care that is free from bias is just the beginning of this important work.

Stay tuned as the section planning board and local chapters use this information to reach more of you through local and statewide events. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you want more information, or if you’d like to be a part of the planning process! Maybe you’ll be the next one to go to the LDC in person!

PA AWHONN leadership that attended included Jane Donovan, Carol McIlHenny, Stacie Massett, Gerri Maurer, Vicky Coleman, and Julia Wheeling



Written by Section Secretary and Treasurer Carol McIlhenny

# MEET THE NEW STUDENT INTERNS

**PA AWHONN is excited to welcome three new student interns to join the board. They will serve from May 2023 to May 2024.**

**Alanna Hendrickson** is a junior BSN student at the University of Pennsylvania. She will be joining us as a student intern from May 2023-May 2024. This summer, she will work as a student nurse extern on a labor & delivery unit at NYU Langone Tisch Hospital. One day, she wants to be a midwife and work at a birthing center. In her free time, she likes to travel! She spent this past winter break in Bangkok, Thailand learning about traditional Chinese and Thai medicine. Most of her time outside of school is spent nannying or traveling home to New Jersey to visit her family



## WELCOME



Hello, my name is **Ashley Defelice**. I am a first year student at Lackawanna College Nursing Associates Program. I am a member of Student Nursing Association of Pennsylvania and serve as their Northeast Coordinator on the Pennsylvania board. I am 29 years old. I am surrounded by love by my husband and three children. I have worked in veterinary medicine for 8 years before switching my career To nursing. My goal is so become a NICU nurse while trying to pursue further education for Nurse Practitioner to work in women's health.



**Veronica Mahlsted** is a Senior Bachelor of Nursing Student at York College of Pennsylvania and a Certified Nursing Assistant. She is from York, PA, and is a member of the Student Nursing Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP). Her next professional goal, in addition to the AWHONN Student Internship, is completing an upcoming student nurse externship on the Labor and Delivery Unit at UPMC Harrisburg. Outside of academics, her hobbies include baking out of my home and volunteering through Habitat for Humanity. She is very excited to be involved with AWHONN and expand her horizons as she nears graduation!



## Thank You

A great big thank you to our outgoing PA AWHONN student intern Sawyer Pietuszka . We were so lucky to have Sawyer. Over the past year, she made so many amazing contributions to the section. Sawyer, you will do great things in nursing and in women's health!

If you are someone you know is interested in becoming a student intern for PA AWHONN the call for applications goes out in January/February of each year.

## NEW MEMBER SHOUT OUT

**Thank you for joining AWHONN. We are excited you are here!**

Rebecca Goldfarb Terry  
 Courtney Coda  
 Hannah Buenrostro  
 Elizabeth Zug  
 Sherre Branch  
 Jamie-Lee Seifried  
 Deborah Schafer

Lauren Johnson  
 Katherine Smith  
 Courtney Nagy  
 Rebecca Janosko  
 Jo Reed  
 Elizabeth Madsen  
 Nicole Bernstein  
 Caroline Folfas  
 Anita Bukovac  
 Susan Straszynski  
 Ruth Severino Lopez

Lorna Deibert  
 Danielle Wolf-Maier  
 Kelsey Horvath  
 Christine Durmis  
 Mollie Scheuermann  
 Shannon Folliard  
 Tiffany Hidlay  
 Cary Devers  
 Lisa Grandizio  
 Jessica Jack  
 Taylor Exacustides

Our PA section is  
 833 members  
 strong!

**Continue to recruit new members!**

# CHAPTER UPDATES

## SOUTH EAST

The SEPA chapter had a meeting on March 22nd. Thank you to all those who attended and to our sponsor Pacira!

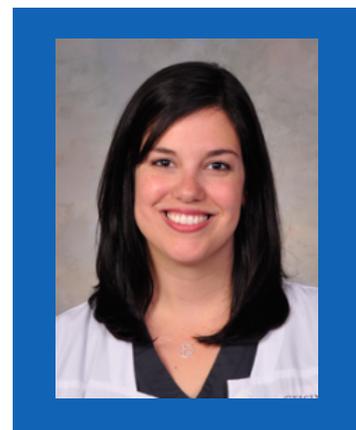
Dr. Kathleen Mahoney presented “Navigating the outcomes of COVID-19 and perinatal care: No yellow brick road, no ruby slippers, and no good witch!” Thank you, Dr. Mahoney, for a fascinating and informative presentation. The planning committee is actively planning a fall meeting—more information to come. The planning committee is looking for new members. If you are interested in helping, please email me at [jdonovan365@gmail.com](mailto:jdonovan365@gmail.com)



Chapter Leader: Jane Donovan  
Email: [jdonovan365@gmail.com](mailto:jdonovan365@gmail.com)

## NORTH EAST

The NEPA section is seeking an engaged person or small team to meet, and review what needs we have as a chapter! If anyone is interested in getting more involved, please reach out to [emconcini@geisinger.edu](mailto:emconcini@geisinger.edu) or 570-575-2219. A small committee to assist in NEPA AWHONN Chapter planning events will improve our networking and collaboration!



Chapter Leader: Elissa Concini  
Email: [emconcini@geisinger.edu](mailto:emconcini@geisinger.edu)

## SOUTH WEST

AWHONN in South West PA is excited to rejuvenate its chapter with an in-person dinner and presentation on best practices for documentation by OB nurses sponsored by PeriGen. Recognizing how many new nurses are entering this specialty, they are having two opportunities to attend either on May 17 in Greensburg and May 18 in Pittsburgh. Check out their new Facebook page [SWPA AWHONN](#) for a link to the flyer and code to register. The chapter is also resuming monthly virtual organizational happy hour meetings on the 2nd Thursday of every month at 5:30 to plan activities to support nurses and their service organization. We are starting with [Boost Girls in Care \(BGIC\)](#), which provides new bras for people in need. BGIC accepts new bras, pajamas, and undergarments as donations.



Co Chapter Leader: Karen Coyne  
Email: [coynek@pitt.edu](mailto:coynek@pitt.edu)



Co Chapter Leader: Kate Endres  
Email: [kateendresrn@yahoo.org](mailto:kateendresrn@yahoo.org)

## NORTH WEST

The Pennsylvania Northwest chapter of AWHONN would like to reinvigorate the local chapter. We invite all members and those interested in joining. Our goal is to come together, as nurses caring for women and newborns, and to build connections within our shared passion. Meetings can be planned on topics relevant to our local needs. For April's meeting, please join us and meet Chrissy Dougan, Pennsylvania Count the Kicks Ambassador. Chrissy will present information about how baby kick counting can be used with expectant parents as a tool to monitor fetal well-being.

Meeting Info: April 25th at 7 pm via Zoom meeting ID: 951 7648 5748 - passcode: 165149 Please contact Kim Bogart at [nursekim71@yahoo.com](mailto:nursekim71@yahoo.com) for more information



Chapter Leader: Kim Bogart  
Email: [nursekim71@yahoo.com](mailto:nursekim71@yahoo.com)

# SOUTH CENTRAL

South-Central Chapter Meet & Greet  
May 21 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Location: Adams County Winery, 251 Peach Tree  
Road, Orrtanna, PA 17353

Open to current AWHONN members, anyone interested in learning more about PA AWHONN, or if you just want to come hang out with some cool other nurses. Light snacks will be provided. You can also bring your own food or purchase it there.

Winery event for that day: Live Music with Kirk  
Wise 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

<https://adamscountywinery.com/event/live-music-on-the-grounds-with-kirk-wise/>



Co Chapter Leader: Tonya Wert  
Email: [twert2@wellspan.org](mailto:twert2@wellspan.org)



Co Chapter Leader: Stacie Massett  
Email: [staciemassett@yahoo.org](mailto:staciemassett@yahoo.org)

## Support After a Severe Maternal Event

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Dedicated in our work to provide trauma informed and respectful maternity care to the birthing people and babies for whom we care, unfortunately as nurses, as part of your day-to-day, we experience scenarios that are often traumatizing. As we approach nurse's week, I want to encourage you all to take time to take care of you.

The term second victim was coined by Wu (2000) and refers to a health care provider who is involved in an unanticipated, adverse patient event, medical error, or patient-related injury and is traumatized by the event and/or their role in it. In addition to resulting in feelings of loneliness, sadness and guilt--traumatization from severe events can result in staff turnover and absenteeism (Morton et al, 2020).

Sheen et al. (2022) states that traumatic events for obstetric providers can involve actual or perceived threats to the moms or babies for whom we care. From these experiences, health care providers can experience intense fear, helplessness or horror (Sheen et al., 2022).

In their research neonatal and obstetric events which were experienced as traumatic by obstetric providers varied and included:

- neonatal and maternal death,
- severe neonatal or maternal complications,
- patient aggression,
- medical errors
- conflicts with colleagues

Specifically, the pace at which patients deteriorated, organizational deficiencies in staffing or resources and an absence of support resulted in increased traumatization for obstetric providers (Sheen et al, 2022). Nurses in our specialty regularly experience events which are unexpected and are associated with a sudden and/or unpredicted deterioration in the patient's condition and not only are nurses required to support the physical symptoms associated with the patient's condition but there is also a significant level of emotionality by patients and their family that we must attend to further increasing risk of traumatization (Sheen et al, 2022).

As a specialty, I believe we are making concerted efforts to improve the support we provide patients and families after severe events we must not forget to also take time to care for ourselves and our colleagues as these events leave imprints deep on our hearts, minds, and souls. We often carry these events, and the women, babies and families involved with us through our entire careers and even long after. Although there is no doubt that these experiences can improve the care we provide, increasing our critical thinking and situational awareness, the trauma associated can also cause us harm. Please take time to acknowledge all of the amazing work you do, take care of and support your peers, DEBRIEF, ensure you implement structured and regular debriefing session after all significant/unexpected events and train unit leaders how to do this debriefing well, normalize the emotional effects of working withing systems where severe events occur.

### **An Eye Towards Quality Improvement--Increasing Clinician Support after a Serious Maternal Event**

- Does your team debrief after all serious events?
- Are debrief leaders provided trainings on how to debrief in a psychological safe manner?
- Do you have a multidisciplinary response team (second victim rapid response, EAP, Peer support etc..) who provide support to clinicians after a severe event?
- If so, is their contact information readily accessible and shared in the debrief?
- Has your team normalized the emotional effects of severe events?
- When doing drills on severe events (hypertension, hemorrhage, shoulder dystocia) do you have participants hold a debrief as they would after a severe event before closing the drill --so they can practice the skills needed to appropriately debrief?

#### **Resources to access and promote support:**

- Debriefing the Front Lines Inc.
- Check out the RISE (Resilience in Stressful Events) program which is a Peer Support Program for Caregivers in Distress Caring for the Caregiver | Johns Hopkins Armstrong Institute (hopkinsmedicine.org)
- National Partnership for Maternal Safety: Consensus Bundle on Support After a Severe Maternal Event (jognn.org)

Finally, I want to use this time to wish you all a Happy (Upcoming) Nurses Week and extend my thanks for all you do each and every day providing respectful care supporting women, birthing people, their families and their neonates in achieving the best outcomes.

*Thank you for going above and beyond!*

*Adriane Burgess --PA AWHONN Section Chair and all the Chapter Leaders*

Morton, C. H., Hall, M. F., Shaefer, S. J. M., Karsnitz, D., Pratt, S. D., Klassen, M., Semenuk, K., & Chazotte, C. (2021). National Partnership for Maternal Safety: Consensus Bundle on Support After a Severe Maternal Event. *Journal of obstetric, gynecologic, and neonatal nursing : JOGNN*, 50(1), 88-101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogn.2020.09.160>

Sheen K, Goodfellow L, Balling K, et al. Which events are experienced as traumatic by obstetricians and gynaecologists, and why? A qualitative analysis from a cross-sectional survey and in-depth interviews. *BMJ Open* 2022;12:e061505. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2022-061505

# HAPPY SPRING PA AWHONN

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- **Instagram** - **awhonnpennsylvania**
- **Facebook Group** - **AWHONN  
Pennsylvania Section**

