



Health & Wellness Curriculum Framework

Resident Registered Nurse Anesthetists (RRNAs) are immersed in highly competitive, rigorous, and stressful educational programs.¹ While positive stress can be a motivating factor, the negative effects of stress affect an individual in mental and physical ways and can lead to unhealthy habits, anxiety, depression, burnout, sleep problems, and potential substance use or abuse.^{1,2} Additionally, current residents, who have worked in critical care nursing roles throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, may have worked through experiences that are impacting their well-being.³

Research affirms that the need for resources and interventions to positively manage daily stressors and improve well-being skills are necessary for a healthier future workforce of anesthesia professionals.² As supported by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) standards, nurse anesthesia educational programs should support residents by acknowledging and addressing the importance of healthy lifestyles, coping mechanisms for stress, physical and mental well-being, and awareness and response to substance use disorder.⁴

In fiscal year 2022, the AANA Health & Wellness and Education Committees along with the Peer Assistance Panel were charged with creating a wellness and substance use disorder curriculum framework that could be utilized by nurse anesthesia educational programs.

The following framework is an AANA resource designed to support nurse anesthesia educators and administrators as they develop a curriculum. The Committees and Panel have identified AANA resources and other activities that could be utilized for wellness and substance use disorder initiatives and content. This framework is a compilation of resources and suggestions for programs and is not all encompassing (nor do programs need to utilize all the resources or suggestions).

Disclaimer

The AANA recognizes this framework serves only as an informational resource. The COA is the sole authority for determining if nurse anesthesia education programs have successfully met the COA standards that reference wellness and substance use disorder. Use of this framework does not ensure a program's compliance with the COA's requirements. Please contact the COA (accreditation@coacna.org) with any questions regarding accreditation requirements for wellness and substance use disorder.

The following framework addresses the five key conceptual components and learning objectives identified in the COA Standards glossary definition (i.e., importance of wellness to healthcare professionals; healthy lifestyles; mental well-being; identifying and addressing SUD; and reentry into the workplace after treatment for SUD).⁴

Importance of Wellness to Healthcare Professionals

<p>AANA Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zwerling Module 1: Silent Sickness: Tackling Shame
<p>In-Class Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music and movement during breaks (group stretching) • Mindfulness and gratitude moments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., mindfulness meditation, list “three good things” about that day/week • In-class games • Academic tutoring and study techniques • Laughing together • Encourage faculty to model boundary setting (demonstrate work/life balance) and other skills, such as kindness) • Professional wellness lectures/discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Speakers on topics such as financial wellness, mindfulness, and healthy coping • Wellness-related assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., Substance use disorder video project, list or discuss wellness activities students have found useful during anesthesia school
<p>Program-Initiated Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness days of no class/clinical • Cohort interactions/meetings during each semester • Teach and encourage wellness-related behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., how to practice mindfulness during medication preparation, journaling, resiliency training, healthy thinking • Election of a resident wellness champion for each cohort • Encourage residents and faculty to participate in wellness events such as Run for Joy • Organize class outings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., Free options such as a guided meditative walk within the school gardens, attending school sports games and tailgating. » Paid options such as group painting, enjoying a meal together • Offer rewards or fun activities during stressful periods of the program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., snacks, coffee, ice cream, therapy dogs, chair massages, yoga class • Professional wellness lectures/discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Host 1-hour sessions at different intervals. Invite a speaker to speak to all cohorts and faculty. Suggestions include staff from the University counseling center, a State Peer Advisor, AANA Committee member » Topics may include professional wellness and psychological first aid, review of resources available within the program and University, substance use disorder, etc. • Engage with clinical sites and preceptors on well-being strategies



Institution-Initiated Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of university resources, counseling, and mental health services (care team) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » University fitness center membership or discounts to a local fitness center » Prayer and meditation room available within the school » Financial counseling • Weekly newsletter of healthy habit tips • Wellness Day with seminars and activities promoting wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Activities such as yoga, healthy eating/cooking, sleep hygiene, and healthy coping mechanisms » Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training for faculty and learners » Host a dinner with a family member or friend in attendance featuring SUD prevention speakers (such as Rodrigo and Claudia Garcia from Parkdale Center for Professionals) • Lunchtime seminar series • Funding for student-led wellness events
Online Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University's resident success/resource website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., See the Duke University School of Nursing's Student Success Center and DuWell which provides education and resources on staying well.

Healthy Lifestyles

AANA Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zwerling Module 3: The Joy and Meaning in Work: Tools for Resiliency and Healthy Lifestyles
In-Class Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring healthy snacks • Frequent stretch breaks • Aromatherapy • Reflective journaling and mindfulness instruction • Share music or playlists for positive mindset
Program-Initiated Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a wellness walk for all faculty and residents • Teach breathing exercises • Stress importance of sleep • Encourage wellness challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Drink 8 glasses of water per day » Write down something you are grateful for 21 days » Steps per day • Multiple lifeline activities spread across semesters including yoga, chair massages, pet therapy days, aromatherapy etc.



Institution-Initiated Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University fitness center membership or discounts to fitness center • Wellness Day with seminars and activities promoting wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Activities such as yoga, healthy eating/cooking, sleep hygiene, and healthy coping mechanisms » Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training for faculty and learners » Host a dinner with a family member or friend in attendance featuring SUD prevention speakers (such as Rigo and Claudia Garcia)
Online Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AANAWellness.com • Apps such as Calm, Headspace, Meditation Studio, Spotify, and Happy • Fitbit and other wearable fitness trackers

Mental Well-Being

AANA Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zwerling Module 2: Catch Me If You Can: The Impaired Provider • Zwerling Module 3: The Joy and Meaning in Work: Tools for Resiliency and Healthy Lifestyles • Suicide Prevention for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs)
In-Class Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognizant of exam timing with other courses (not to overwhelm with multiple exams at the same time)
Program-Initiated Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer mentorship • Open door policy for faculty (assign faculty members at the beginning of the semester) • Resident check-in sessions with designated faculty member • Meet with families to discuss responsibilities of RRNAs and nurse anesthesia programs • Debrief session for clinical days • Cohort interactions/meetings during each semester • Teach skills such as being a personal advocate and speaking up for yourself • Discuss the importance of connecting with family, friends, or other people in a support system • Discuss strategies for managing negative thoughts • Provide support and encouragement for volunteering (allow time during clinical days or schedule during NNAW)



Institution-Initiated Activities/ Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic tutoring and study techniques • List of university resources, counseling, and mental health services (care team)
Online or Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Five Minute Journal • Example of university student resource center • Stress First Aid for Healthcare Workers • Managing Self-Care During COVID-19 with Dr. Sean Convoy • Apps such as Calm, Headspace, Meditation Studio, Spotify and Happy

Identifying and Addressing SUD & Reentry into the workplace after treatment for SUD

In-Class Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Aspects course: discuss substance use disorder (SUD)
Program-Initiated Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AANA State Peer Advisor (SPA) presentation and small group discussion • Knowledge of clinical site policies • Session in SUD identification and how to intervene incorporated into clinical orientation (session prior to entering the clinical portion of the program) • DNP Project related to simulation and reentry
Institution-Initiated Activities/ Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opioid Epidemic Awareness and Education Program • Wellness Day with seminars and activities promoting wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Activities such as yoga, healthy eating/cooking, sleep hygiene, and healthy coping mechanisms » Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training for faculty and learners » Host a dinner with a family member or friend in attendance featuring SUD prevention speakers (such as Rigo and Claudia Garcia)
Online Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State BON websites • AANA Helpline number 1-800-654-5167 • AANA Peer Assistance Resources: www.aana.com/gettinghelp



OTHER RESOURCES

- [Zwerling Module 5: Empowering Nurses to Drive Healthcare Innovation](#)
- [Zwerling Module 4: Speaking up for Safety - Finding Your Voice](#)
- [Do Not Let Another Light Go Out: Suicide Recognition and Prevention](#) (use during faculty-led discussion)
- [Jan Stewart Memorial Lecture: My Life with Dirty John](#) (use during faculty-led discussion)

References

1. Chipas A, Cordrey D, Floyd D, Grubbs L, Miller S, Tyre B. Stress: perceptions, manifestations, and coping mechanisms of student registered nurse anesthetists. AANA J. 2012;80(4 Suppl):S49-55.
2. Mesisca J, Mainwaring J. Stress, Anxiety, and Well-being in Nurse Anesthesia Doctoral Students. AANA J. 2021;89(5):396-402.
3. Galanis P, Vraka I, Fragkou D, Bilali A, Kaitelidou D. Nurses' burnout and associated risk factors during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Adv Nurs. 2021;77(8):3286-3302.
4. Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. Standards for Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Programs: Practice Doctorate. Park Ridge, IL: COA; 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.coacrna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Standards-for-Accreditation-of-Nurse-Anesthesia-Programs-Practice-Doctorate-revised-January-2022.pdf>

