

Anthony Watkins, MSN, RN, NE-BC

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Watkins, MSN, RN, NE-BC, brings over fifteen years of experience as a Pediatric Registered Nurse and Nurse Leader. His career spans both the Pediatric Emergency Department and the Pediatric ICU, where he has consistently demonstrated dedication, compassion, and a wealth of knowledge as a nurse leader. Currently serving as the Clinical Manager of the North Campus Emergency Department at Children's Hospital Colorado, Anthony has consistently driven team success and achieved outstanding project outcomes through his leadership and expertise.

In addition to his role at Children's Hospital Colorado, Anthony has been a valuable member of the Colorado Organization of Nurse Leaders (CONL) Board of Directors since 2021, where he has served as Chair for the Annual Fall Conference.

Anthony holds a Master of Science in Nursing Leadership and Health Care Systems from the University of Colorado. His dedication to community involvement and education drives his commitment to the future of the nursing profession, fostering growth and development for the next generation of nurses.

STATEMENTS

- 1. Statement describing the biggest issue facing AONL and potential strategies to address the issue.**

The biggest issue facing AONL is workforce shortages, exacerbated by burnout and high turnover rates. Addressing this requires enhanced recruitment and retention strategies. As a Clinical Nurse Manager, I have firsthand knowledge of trends, tools, and best practices in recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and retaining a diverse workforce. I create supportive environments and implement DHEI initiatives to retain staff. By fostering inclusion, providing mentorship, and offering continuous professional development, I ensure a committed and diverse workforce ready to meet modern healthcare demands. These strategies improve retention and enhance patient care quality.

- 2. Please describe your actions to increase diversity, equity and inclusion within your organization or community.**

I lead hospital-wide trainings on Unconscious Bias in Healthcare and have spoken at nursing conferences on this topic, emphasizing the importance of DHEI. I support diversity initiatives by hosting MC2 interns, targeting high-achieving, motivated high school students from underrepresented groups. By mentoring these students and providing hands-on experience, I help build a more diverse future nursing workforce. I advocate for health equity through events like "Men in Nursing," showcasing diverse male role models to underrepresented middle school students. Promoting diversity and inclusion in nursing ensures healthcare providers reflect the communities they serve, improving health outcomes and

- 3. Please describe the unique perspective or skills you would bring to the AONL Board.**

My unique perspective as a male nurse leader in a pediatric hospital combined with passion for recruitment, retention, diversity & inclusion, sets me as a valuable asset to the AONL Board. I have extensive experience on RN Boards, leading unconscious bias training, supporting diverse interns, and advocating for health equity. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I champion diversity &

inclusion. My roles in education, conference planning, & application review enhance my ability to foster collaboration and drive positive change. I contribute to publications on accreditation readiness and financial acumen for nurse managers, demonstrating my commitment to advancing nursing practice.

4. Please describe your actions to improve health outcomes through advocacy.

I focus on improving pediatric mental health by hosting my local congresswoman at my hospital to discuss legislative agendas aimed at increasing access to mental health services. This includes advocating for additional beds and enhanced career pipelines for nurses specializing in pediatric mental health. Additionally, I actively participate in the CONL legislative affairs group, where I review and provide positions on various state-level legislative items. Through this work, I aim to influence policies that support better health outcomes for children and ensure that our healthcare system can adequately address their mental health needs.