

Children's of Alabama 2021 Nursing Annual Report



Children's
of Alabama®

A Letter from the Chief Nursing Officer

Greetings from Andy Loehr,

Sr. VP, Operations and Chief Nursing Officer

I'm honored to present the 2021 Nursing Annual Report, which highlights the outstanding talents and contributions of our nursing professionals. Countless accomplishments transpired in 2021, despite the continued challenges of the COVID pandemic. Children's of Alabama nurses proved, once again, their resilience and ability to shine in the face of unpredictable healthcare transitions.

2021 was a year that we witnessed record-breaking happenings within our organization. We saw unsurpassed patient volumes in inpatient, outpatient and primary care settings throughout the year, and our surgical services volumes rebounded to pre-COVID numbers. In addition to the volume increases, we experienced an unparalleled amount of staff illnesses related to COVID. Despite these unforeseeable impacts on our teams, every patient was appropriately cared for. Our nurses are to thank for that accomplishment; we have a nursing team like no other!

As nurses, we know there will always be a need to deliver exceptional clinical and compassionate care during times of stress and change. Our nurses are committed to patient safety and quality which is apparent through our recognition from Solutions for Patient Safety (SPS) as the hospital of the month for October 2021. Out of 100+ hospitals in the SPS collaborative, we were, once again, selected as an example of excellence. This report celebrates your successes and your positive impacts.

I am very proud of our nursing teams. I feel privileged to lead such an amazing group of professionals.

Andrew B. Loehr



Inside This Report

Nursing by the Numbers	3
Spotlight on COVID-19	4
Staffing Challenges	5
Patient Care	6
Nursing Professional Development	8
Shared Governance Council	10
Awards and Honors	11

Nursing by the Numbers

2,036 Nurses

- **75%** Full-time
- **15%** Part-time
- **10%** PRN/Flex
- **75%** Nurses reporting < 10 years in practice
- **32%** Nurses reporting > 10 years in practice

332 Beds

48 NICU Bassinets

1,154 Critical Care Transports

66,522 Emergency Department Visits

25,695 Surgeries Performed

15,142 Hospital Discharges



Spotlight on COVID-19

COVID-19 continued to provide unique challenges for healthcare, and Children's of Alabama was no exception. We applied lessons learned from the previous year and what continues to be unprecedented has become a new normal.

The organization continued to implement strategies to protect patients, families, visitors and staff. Visitation to our patients was limited; each visitor was screened before entering the buildings, and universal masking was required. In 2021, we experienced the impact of the second wave of increased COVID cases in the community. We hit our new record number of 29 patients admitted who were COVID positive.

Unique challenges resulted in unique opportunities and solutions. One such strategy was transitioning one of the Medical-Surgical inpatient units to a locked unit. This change was a big win when caring for certain patients. Locked entry and exit points added a layer of security we had not previously had to offer outside of the inpatient Behavioral Health unit. Two examples of patient types that benefited from being housed in this area include behavioral health patients at risk for elopement but needing medical services, as well as behavioral health patients that were COVID positive but still receiving services from Psychiatry. Both patient types now continue to receive the treatment they need within a more secure environment.

We also had the honor to be part of history as our nursing leaders and staff members assisted with multiple clinics to administer the COVID-19 vaccine for our employees. Working with clinical partners, we provided vaccination access to employees. Nursing leaders scheduled employee appointments and administered the vaccine not only to employees but also our community partners. Later in the year, we developed processes to provide COVID vaccinations to patients and parents during the hospital admission.

Providing onsite vaccine clinics helped to achieve 90% vaccination of employees in 2021.



Staffing Challenges



Hospitals nationwide experienced higher than average census with fewer nurses to care for patients, and Children's of Alabama was no different. We implemented creative strategies to provide incentives and reward nurses to work extra shifts.

At mid-year, Children's of Alabama moved from a centralized staffing model to unit-based staffing with tier level bonus paid for extra hours worked. On-call shifts were utilized to schedule extra staff on an as-needed basis with call back and tier level bonus paid when there was a need to work the extra shift. Departments with the greatest vacancy rates offered retention plans. Nurses participating in the retention plans agreed to work a set number of weekly hours and were paid a bonus at the end of the 16-week period.

As 2021 grew to a close, use of on-call and retention bonuses began to become less popular amongst staff. We reassessed staffing needs and designed a more innovative and strategic approach to staffing units. A new plan called the Internal Staffing Option (ISO) was implemented early December. Nurses selected to participate in ISO agreed to work 12 hours extra each week for eight weeks. A high tier bonus was paid for each ISO shift worked, and a bonus was paid at the end of the 8-week period.

Staffing to meet the needs of our patients is often a challenge, but 2021 was unique with consistently high patient volume, fewer nurses and all feeling the impacts of COVID-19. As always, the nurses at Children's of Alabama did what was necessary to care for our patients.

Patient Care

Strategic Work Alliance Team (SWAT)

The Nursing Rapid Response Team at Children's of Alabama is known as SWAT.

Our SWAT team continued their great work in 2021 breaking several records set in previous years. This team of seven has over 100 years of combined nursing experience. They collaborate with our bedside nurses and charge nurses regularly ensuring patient needs are met. In 2021, the team completed more Children's Hospital Assessment Team (CHAT) evaluations, IV placement, and chemotherapy administration opportunities than any previous year.

	2019	2020	2021
CHATs	820	584	927
IV Placement	4779	4748	6055
Chemo check/ Administration	29	135	204

ECMO

The ECMO Team is happy to announce the purchase and implementation of an entirely new equipment fleet. After a great deal of research, the Spectrum Quantum ECLS Platform was the superior choice as replacement for our previous ECMO machines. In addition to dependable hardware and disposables, this ECLS platform offers integrative technology and interfacing to enhance safety and performance. The compact design of the new system maximizes mobility in the ICU while offering flexibility. A huge thank you to the Foundation as well for their involvement in this project. Through their efforts, we gained financial support from some of the state's most generous community leaders. The Operations Coordinator partnered with Spectrum Medical to provide dynamic team training and education. Our team collectively spent over 90 additional hours in wet labs and Q&A sessions to gain in-depth knowledge and complete required competencies. The new equipment was implemented into our service ahead of schedule in December 2021. We have since placed eight patients on ECMO using the new equipment. Data collection, evaluation of new equipment and stewardship reporting are ongoing following implementation.



Patient Care



Dialysis

The Dialysis Unit underwent an unannounced recertification CMS survey in June 2021, and it was determined the facility was in substantial compliance. In addition, the Dialysis Unit had many noteworthy accomplishments for 2021. The Dialysis Unit has participated in the SCOPE (Standardizing Care to Improve Outcomes in Pediatric ESRD) collaborative for five years.

Peritonitis reduction in the chronic peritoneal dialysis patient population through standardization of patient selection criteria and team review, routine training reviews with each monthly clinic visit and utilizing a standard ACA with each episode of peritonitis

- **2021 Children's peritonitis rate:** one episode every 11.6 months (national standard one episode/ 18-20 months).

BSI reduction in chronic hemodialysis patient population through standardization of using Clear Guard CHG caps; infant catheter securement with statlock and ace wrap, caregiver continual education.

- **2021:** 0.8 infections/100 patient months (improved from 3.47 infections/100 patient months in 2019)

Our Acute Dialysis Program is among the top three institutions for neonatal and AKI management. The Acute Team has successfully presented three virtual NICKS (Neonatal and Infant Course for Kidney Support) courses in 2021. NICKS is a 1.5-day virtual course providing education via didactic lectures, hands-on skills lab and team-based simulations. This course has been offered since 2020 with participants attending from around the world. Many of the dialysis team RNs, NPs and essential staff present topics and participate in this course.

An advance practice RN was added for standardization of care in the chronic dialysis patient population.

To assist with staffing needs, RN recruitment was opened to new graduates.

Critical Care Transport

In 2021, we transitioned from a single-engine Bell 407 helicopter to a twin-engine Airbus H145 helicopter. The new H145 provides us much more interior room to care for our patients and take additional caregivers as needed. The H145 has auto pilot, advanced terrain avoidance technology, weather radar and all necessary equipment for us to fly by Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). We also have the addition of liquid oxygen on the aircraft versus compressed oxygen tanks in the other aircraft. This gives us much more oxygen supply if needed for our critically ill patients on higher oxygen demands.

Nursing Professional Development



The Nursing Professional Development Department (NPD) at Children's of Alabama is dedicated to developing all nurses as professionals. Education begins at the time of hire and continues throughout a nurse's tenure in the healthcare system. Children's also provides education for nurses in the community and throughout the state by offering knowledge of best practices in pediatric care. NPD offers clinical education hours to multiple schools of nursing throughout the state (and beyond) providing clinical rotations and preceptorships for undergraduate and graduate students.

To support our nurses, the department hosts multiple programs, including a comprehensive nursing service orientation program; a transition into practice program (TIP) for all newly hired, recently graduated nurses; a precepting for success program; continuing nursing education; basic life support; neonatal resuscitation program; pediatric advanced life support; and educational and simulation experiences for nursing and other interdisciplinary team members. In addition to these programs, there are education days targeted for specific specialized nursing units as a means to grow each nurse.

In 2021, NPD provided nursing service orientation for 300 newly hired nurses for inpatient units and saw 242 of these nurses successfully complete the TIP program. The department coordinated clinical rotations for 6,882 students, provided preceptorships for 158 undergraduate nursing students and 141 preceptorships for nurse practitioner and physician assistant students. Twelve preceptorships for students seeking a graduate degree in nursing education or leadership/management were provided.

Children's of Alabama was approved to continue as a provider of continuing nursing education in Alabama by the Alabama Board of Nursing (provider #ABNP0113; exp 03/31/2025) and given an extension to continue providing continuing nursing profession development by The Alabama State Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (provider #: 5-173, exp: 03/31/2022).

- 198 activities/classes/programs were assigned a total of 426.2 ABN (347.45 ANCC) nursing contact hours and 59.4 ABN (48.8 ANCC) pharmacy hours.
- 768 activities totaling 1848 hours of instructions were provided
- 2,109 ABN (1757.5 ANCC) nursing contact hours were provided to 12,440 participants (8,675 nurses, 128 pharmacists, 120 physicians, and 3,517 other learners, i.e. CA, USS, BI, BA, RTT, PT and OT)

Having the added option of online courses, participants came from multiple states and areas across Alabama. The majority of participants were Children's employees.

Nursing Professional Development

Community Activities

Children's of Alabama provided six virtual **School Nurse Workshops** in 2021. Just over 1,000 school nurses across our state attended the events and were awarded Alabama Board of Nursing contact hours.

Topics included diabetes updates for the school nurse, COVID updates in children, the SHINE Clinic at Children's, hemophilia, pediatric headaches, sickle cell, inflammatory bowel disease and Crohn's disease.

In addition, over 200 Alabama school nurses participated in virtual skills education events in 2021.

These school nurses received education related to the care of students with high acuity needs related to trachs, gastrostomy tubes and insulin pumps. School districts in 50 counties received free trach and G-Tube manikins from Children's to aid in the delivery of these classes. Our highly motivated and experienced clinicians in pulmonary and general surgery instructed school nurses by using the manikins on the Zoom offerings. The emergency skills practice and time for question and answers from the Children's clinicians always prove to be appreciated by the school nurses in our state.

MySchoolNurse.net is a Children's website that houses educational offerings and resources free of charge for school nurses. The site reached 5,000 visitors in 2021.

Body Trek is a mobile learning center project through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama and Children's. The mobile program has been on hold during the pandemic due to infection control limitations. Videos of the stations within the exhibit were used with elementary schools in early 2021 to determine the feasibility of the content in the virtual format. A pilot project to partner with McAdory High School career tech class was developed to deliver the BodyTrek content to their feeder elementary schools. The structure is to train high school students from career tech in the BodyTrek content and teach the classes in stations during elementary PE classes. Work is ongoing to see if the content can be taught without the use of the bus exhibit.

Nursing Professional Development continues to support the mission and vision of Children's of Alabama through community and state offerings such as the Alabama school nurse workshops, donating supplies to schools of nursing and visits for nursing colleges. Internally, the department continues to sustain the **Education Forum**, a collective group of multidisciplinary team educators that plan and implement system-wide educational initiatives. Educators believe knowledge can help change the world and most definitely improve the lives of our children.



Shared Governance Council

Children's of Alabama's Shared Governance Council is an empowering forum for nurses to identify, prioritize and recommend actions related to leadership, education, practice and innovation.

Evidence-Based Practice Council

The Evidence-Based Practice and Research Council promotes the knowledge necessary to support other nurses in acquiring, creating and disseminating evidence-based practice.

Each year the council establishes a professional atmosphere in which staff use evidence-based practice through a definitive inquiry model to improve care among the nursing teams in our organization. Ongoing objectives for this hardworking group are to generate questions of inquiry based on current patient care trends or issues, conduct comprehensive review of current evidence from peer reviewed literature sources, and recommend practice change based on findings. Goals for 2021 were all encompassing of the council objectives and included improving member understanding of scientific inquiry methodology and steps of the EBP process, sharing available tools and resources for completing literature review and appraisal of sources, and initiation of specific nursing projects within the organization. We focused on education for the first part of the year while turning our attention to specialized projects for the remaining meetings. The projects were developed to incorporate an evidence-based approach to improve knowledge, update processes, identify gaps to integrate current evidence into practice, improve employee/patient satisfaction and experience, and improve outcomes. Although we may face unforeseen challenges along the way, the members of the EBP Council diligently promote evidence-based practice in our organization to ultimately improve the value of care we provide to our patients.



Management Council

During 2021, Management Council was responsible for planning the events and activities to celebrate National Nurses Week. We had a successful Nurses Week while following the COVID guidelines in place. The council was also responsible for planning the activities associated with Support Staff Day. In addition to planning these events, Management Council was able to update and publish the Nursing Dressing Code Policy.

Finally, we focused on filling the void created when Clinical Assistants and Unit Support Specialists were reallocated from their home units to sit with patients requiring a 1:1 sitter. We created a priority list of tasks to be completed on each unit when staff is reallocated and a process of delegating those tasks to other staff members.

Clinical Practice Council

Clinical Practice Council remained committed to our mission of promoting the acquisition of knowledge and competencies necessary to support nurses and nursing support staff in acquiring, creating and disseminating evidence-based practice to improve the care of patients and families at Children's of Alabama. Our council's identified project for 2021 focused on reducing Mislabeled Lab Specimens. We collaborated with Performance Improvement and the Mislabeled Specimens Team and were able to trial and roll out the project, The Final Check, where we label all labs at the bedside saying the patient's last three digits of their MRN out loud to help reduce mislabeled lab specimens at Children's. In addition, we also reviewed 103 Nursing Policies and approximately 36 Pharmacy Policies in 2021.

Quality and Safety Council

To emphasize the importance to medical professionals within Children's of Alabama of Joint Commission preparedness, the Quality and Safety Council focused upon Joint Commission standards that Children's of Alabama could improve upon. For the majority of 2021, the council focused on medication administration and the importance of identifying and administering the correct medications to the correct patients. Quality Council focused on troubleshooting KBMA scanners to ensure that all nurses felt supported and that our patients were kept safe when technical issues arise.

For the last quarter of 2021, Quality and Safety focused on preparing for our Joint Commission window coming up for the year of 2022. Administration of blood products, obtaining informed consent and provision of care were the main focal points for the 2021 council. The council chose to educate their respective units on the importance of these issues and analyzed room for improvement. Quality and Safety will continue to focus on Joint Commission preparedness until we receive our visit and successfully pass inspection.

Awards and Honors



Children's of Alabama is proud to honor individual nurses who earned awards and recognition in 2021. Congratulations!

The 2021 DAISY Award Winners

Nurses who receive the DAISY award personify Children's of Alabama's remarkable patient experience. These individuals demonstrate excellence by serving as a role model for the nursing profession, demonstrating a caring attitude in all situations, communicating and making a significant difference in the life of a patient.

- **Chloe Wade**, 7 Dearth
- **Caroline Hall**, PICU
- **Allison Monaco**, 10 QB
- **Tracy Barefield**, Clinic 8
- **Amber Jordan**, SCU
- **Chase Orozco**, CCU
- **Leland Johnson**, 9 QB
- **Morgan Corder**, CVICU
- **Tammy Newman**, Behavioral Health
- **Cindy Brown**, 9 QB
- **Palmer Fant**, CCU
- **Michael Salak**, PICU

2021 Excellence in Nursing Awards

Eleven Children's of Alabama nurses were recognized for Excellence in Nursing as part of the hospital's National Nurses Week annual observance in May. The awards recognize and celebrate nurses for their skill, compassion and professionalism.

- **Taylor Clayton**, Pediatric Practices Excellence Award, Vestavia Pediatrics
- **Candice Cummings**, Critical Care Excellence, PICU
- **Jackie Crandall**, Specialty Care Services Excellence Award, Infusion Clinic
- **Annelle Reed**, Advanced Practice Excellence Award, Rheumatology/Pediatrics
- **Ella Chandler McAnear**, Rising Star Award, Special Care Unit
- **Nicole Zylstra**, Charge Nurse Excellence Award, Clinic 8
- **Randi Bowling**, Acute Care Excellence Award, 10QB
- **Christine Evans**, Surgical Services Excellence Award, Minor Procedure OR
- **Beth Benton**, Educational Excellence Award, 8QB/BMT
- **Darcey Ansley**, Leadership Excellence Award, PICU
- **Mary Katherine Smith**, Excellence in Mentorship Award, 8QB/BMT

In addition, 61 nurses participated in the Nursing Clinical Excellence Program. This program recognizes nurses that accomplish activities in various categories including Continued Nursing Education, Leadership, Education, Quality Improvement, Practice and Research and Community Service.

Awards and Honors

LIGHTING THE WAY: Alabama Children's ED Boasts Teamwork as Impetus for Patient Care Success

The best emergency departments represent the intersection of exceptional care quality and speedy treatment times.

Celebrating its first **ENA Lantern Award** this year, Children's of Alabama in Birmingham meets that intersection using standing orders and care pathways to expedite care while keeping it top-notch.

"We're all part of this quality initiative, working together," said Lisa Maloney, MSN, RN, unit director of the emergency department at Children's of Alabama.

And when Maloney says "all" she means it. In fact, she's proudest of the way the ED team comes together to further quality care. She pointed to the team's focus on the correlation between fever and sepsis as a prime example.

"We have nursing at the table, we have our docs at the table," she said. "We have people that do our data collection, and then we have a pharmacist at the table too because we know how instrumental they are for our success with this pathway."

The success of pathways and standing orders has enabled staff to provide faster care for patients who meet certain criteria and improve communication between the nursing staff and parents so they can understand immediately what to expect.

In March, the department surpassed the national benchmarks pertaining to all categories of nurse-patient communication and explanations for the previous eight quarters.

One shining example of the pathways' success is the department's response to fevers in high-risk children, such as those with cancer, and how quickly they get antibiotics to those patients.

"There are kids where that timeliness of antibiotics actually really does save lives," said Kathy Monroe, MD, division director for pediatric emergency medicine at Children's of Alabama.

Although the ED was close to meeting the timeliness goals, it wasn't quite there. Nurses, however, turned the tide: The standard order understanding and compliance led to more than 76 percent of high-risk patients in triage receiving antibiotics within an hour of their arrival in the ED in 2020.

"Having a nurse-led champion for this absolutely is what made the difference, and we've really turned our times around," Monroe said. "It's been very impressive."

It's just one of the many times that teamwork and communication made a difference in the lives of the pediatric patients who visit the ED at Children's of Alabama.

Positive changes might happen when people work alone, "but not as far, and as much, and as impactful as when the team really works together," Monroe said.

Reprinted with permission, ENA Connection.



Emergency department staff at Children's of Alabama in Birmingham



Children's
of Alabama®

1600 7th Ave. S. • Birmingham, AL 35233 • 205-638-9100

ChildrensAL.org/Nursing