

**TITLE:** Leadership Practices of Veterans Health Administration Nurse Executives: An Exploration of Current Practices and Professional Development Needs

**RESEARCHER:** Virginia H. Bieber  
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University  
Doctoral Dissertation: December 2003

**OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of this study was to explore self-reported leadership practices of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Medical Center Nurse Executives, examine leadership strengths of the Nurse Executives, and report professional development needs of the Nurse Executives.

**METHODOLOGY:** From the population of all Nurse Executives in the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, 73 responded (52% response rate). Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. The typical respondent was female (88%), with an average age of 52 years, holding a master's degree (90%), with 18 years experience as an administrative nurse and just over 11 years as a Clinical Nurse. Reliability for the LPI in this study was .79 Challenging, .84 Inspiring, .71 Enabling, .60 Modeling, and .86 Encouraging.

**KEY FINDINGS:** Nurse Executives reported engaging most frequently in Enabling, followed by Modeling, Encouraging, Challenging and Inspiring. Nurse Executives reported engaging in each of the five leadership practices significantly more often than the normative database (Kouzes & Posner). There was no relationship between the five leadership practices and the number of leadership training respondents had completed or participated in. No significant differences were found between Nurse Executives serving on the Top Management Team of the Medical Center compared with those not serving at this level. No significant differences were found on the five leadership practices based upon gender, total years of experience, or education levels.

The top 10 essential leadership skills were communication skills (67%), interpersonal skills (42%), integrity (39%), visionary skills (32%), coaching-mentoring skills (26%), conflict-negotiation skills (26%), systems thinking skills (25%), personal mastery (24%), financial skills (24%) and organization skills (21%)