

# ASHP Statement on Leadership as a Professional Obligation

## Position

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) believes that the pharmacy workforce has a professional obligation to serve as leaders in the safe and effective use of medications. These leaders have an obligation to encourage pharmacy practitioners, administrators, faculty members, preceptors, technicians, and learners to advance patient care and strengthen the pharmacy profession by embracing the responsibility to exert leadership within their practices and across their organizations. ASHP urges the pharmacy workforce to accept this responsibility, actively seek the development of leadership skills, and exercise leadership when working with others within and outside of the profession.

ASHP encourages colleges of pharmacy, pharmacy technician training programs, and employers to grow the pipeline for developing a diverse group of future leaders by extending beyond management coursework and integrating education on leadership as a practice philosophy throughout the training and curriculum. The pharmacy workforce shares the responsibility to mentor pharmacy students, pharmacy residents, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and non-pharmacist support staff. Pharmacy workforce members in formal leadership roles have a specific responsibility to: 1) foster the development of leadership skills among others within the workforce; 2) facilitate the development of practice models that provide regular opportunities to exercise leadership; 3) encourage others to exercise leadership in practice; and 4) build relationships across the organization to serve as the voice of pharmacy and safe medication use. ASHP also encourages hospital and health-system executives to support the development of leadership skills of all healthcare professionals.

## Leadership in practice

The ASHP Statement on Professionalism includes leadership (“influenc[ing] others with unquestionable integrity”) as a professional responsibility shared by individuals and the institutions where they work.<sup>1</sup> The ASHP Statement on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Pharmacy Executive explains the formal leadership roles of the pharmacy executive, including the responsibility to successfully build and manage relationships with diverse groups to ensure pharmacy is involved with strategic planning and decision making processes.<sup>2</sup> As both of those statements highlight, the pharmacy workforce also has the professional obligation to serve as leaders in the safe and effective use of medications.

Definitions of leadership commonly focus on working toward goals and exerting influence.<sup>3</sup> For example, Nahata<sup>4</sup> stated that leadership “is about a vision, direction, strategies, motivating, and inspiring.” The focus on goals and influence guides understanding of the inherent requirement for leadership in pharmacy. The success of current pharmacy practice models and the successful implementation of future models rest on the ability of members of the profession to influence others. In the complex and evolving healthcare environment, leadership from the pharmacy workforce is required to promote and advance the profession and our care for patients. Thus, leadership is not an option—it is a professional obligation.

The most successful organizations facilitate the inclusive development of routine leadership roles and encourage participation in those roles. The frontline pharmacy workforce must exhibit

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*Note: This statement has not yet been published in the [American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy \(AJHP\)](#). Some minor editorial differences may exist between this document and the official one that will eventually appear in [AJHP](#) and [Best Practices for Hospital and Health-System Pharmacy](#).*

themselves as leaders each time they step into the workplace. The practice of effectively influencing the behavior of physicians, pharmacists, nurses, pharmacy technicians, learners, support staff, and other healthcare team members to optimize medication safety and patient outcomes constitutes successful leadership. Such leadership often requires pharmacy team members to work across interprofessional teams to optimize patient safety and medication use. Innovative practice models can support the development of both clinical and leadership skills. ASHP encourages development and implementation of these types of practice models.

Each pharmacy workforce member's personal and professional experiences affect how they approach the patients and decisions that come before them. The diversity of their perspectives and lived experiences fosters decision-making that better reflects the whole population, resulting in better, richer analyses as clinicians and healthcare leaders. When pharmacy leadership includes all voices and perspectives, practicing members of the team and members of the public are more likely to trust theirs will be heard. The ASHP Task Force on Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has put forth recommendations to promote this aspect of leadership.<sup>5</sup>

The obligation to develop a pharmacy workforce prepared for professional leadership requires colleges of pharmacy, pharmacy technician training programs, and employers to adopt the training of leadership and its values. Currently, leadership training is inconsistently present in both academic and practice settings. White's survey<sup>6</sup> as well as the report of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Argus Commission<sup>7</sup> support the need for formalized training programs to cultivate the required leadership training among learners. To cultivate high-quality candidates to fill the pharmacy leadership gap, the report also recommends expansion of didactic leadership training, distance learning programs, the use of social media for networking and mentorship, and an increased focus on the full spectrum of leadership. All members of the pharmacy workforce should take personal responsibility for leadership of the medication-use process and for mentorship of learners, pharmacy technicians, and other colleagues. Although it is not the exclusive responsibility of formal pharmacy leaders such as pharmacy directors and managers, formal leaders must foster and support diverse leadership among the members of a pharmacy team.

The pharmacy workforce also has an obligation to exert leadership and participate in shaping the future of the profession.<sup>8</sup> Participation in professional societies such as ASHP and ASHP state affiliates provides opportunities to shape the future of the profession and affords excellent opportunities for the development of leadership skills. Professional organizations such as ASHP and ASHP state affiliates also have an obligation to encourage the development of leadership skills and support their development among their memberships.

## **Conclusion**

Leadership is a professional obligation of all members of the pharmacy workforce and not the exclusive responsibility of those who hold formal leadership roles or titles. All members of the pharmacy workforce should accept the obligation to develop and exert leadership skills to ensure the safe and effective use of medications. Colleges of pharmacy, pharmacy technician training schools, professional organizations, and employers should encourage the development of these skills among learners and practitioners and should provide both formal training and opportunities for all team members to develop leadership capability and capacity.

## References

1. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. ASHP statement on professionalism. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2022; 79:1612–1616.
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3. Holdford DA. Leadership theories and their lessons for pharmacists. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2003; 60:1780–1786.
4. Nahata MC. Balancing leadership and management. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2001; 65:295–296.
5. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Report of the ASHP Task Force on Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2021; 78:903–906. [doi.org/10.1093/ajhp/zxab078](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajhp/zxab078)
6. White SJ. Will there be a pharmacy leadership crisis? An ASHP Foundation Scholar-in-Residence report. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2005; 62:845–55.
7. Kerr RA, Beck DE, Doss J et al. Building a sustainable system of leadership development for pharmacy: report of the 2008–09 Argus Commission. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2009; 73(suppl):S5.
8. ASHP Practice Advancement Initiative 2030: New recommendations for advancing pharmacy practice in health systems. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2020; 77:113-121.

## Additional Resources

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. ASHP statement on advocacy as a professional obligation. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2019; 76:251–4.

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Section of Pharmacy Practice Leaders.

<https://www.ashp.org/pharmacy-practice-leadership>

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Leadership Resource Center.

<https://www.ashp.org/pharmacy-practice/resource-centers/leadership>

ASHP Foundation Pharmacy Leadership Academy.® <https://www.ashpfoundation.org/leadership-development/pharmacy-leadership-academy>

American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Pharmacy Leadership Certificate: Management Basics.

<https://elearning.ashp.org/products/10194/pharmacy-leadership-management-basics-certificate>

ASHP Practitioner Recognition Program. <https://www.ashp.org/about-ashp/awards/board-of-directors-awards/ashp-fellows>

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists accredits [pharmacy residency training programs](#) in the following topic areas:

- Community-Based Pharmacy Administration and Leadership
- Corporate Pharmacy Administration and Leadership
- Health System Pharmacy Administration and Leadership
- Pharmacy Administration and Leadership with Masters (Community; Health-System; Specialty)
- Specialty Pharmacy Administration and Leadership

## Additional information

Developed through the ASHP Council on Pharmacy Management and approved by the ASHP Board of Directors on February 28, 2023, and by the ASHP House of Delegates on May 18, 2023. This statement supersedes the ASHP Statement on Leadership as a Professional Obligation dated June 12, 2011.

**Acknowledgments**

The contributions of Ashley Mains Espinosa, PharmD, MS, CPHIMS, FASHP, and David R. Witmer, PharmD, to the previous version of this statement are gratefully acknowledged.

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**Disclosures**

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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