

History of the Mississippi Nurses' Association

Founded in 1911 as the Mississippi State Association of Graduate Nurses (MSAGN), the Mississippi Nurses' Association, as it became known in 1932, continues to work side-by-side with Mississippi nurses to improve health standards and the availability of health care services for Mississippians; foster high standards of nursing; stimulate and promote the professional development of nurses; and promote and protect the professional environment of nurses.

The Mississippi State Association of Graduate Nurses (MSAGN) was founded under the leadership of Jennie Quinn Cameron and Leola Steele at the Natchez Charity Hospital. After formalizing its constitution and creating its bylaws and code of ethics, MSAGN held its first convention in October 1911. The members of MSAGN understood the need for professional regulation, and formed a legislative committee to draft a proposal for a practice act to establish a board of nurse examiners which would be comparable to legislative efforts in other states. On March 14, 1914, the Nurse Practice Act became law and by late October of the same year licenses were being issued to registered nurses in Mississippi. It should be noted that this was accomplished during a time when women were prohibited from voting.

MSAGN realized the value of networking. Correspondence was regularly distributed to legislators, officers of related organizations, and other influential people when addressing issues that affected the profession of nursing and healthcare of Mississippians. As the United States entered two World Wars and more hospitals were created, a need for more nurses and schools of nursing ensued. The MSAGN membership increased and legislation evolved as the profession of nursing expanded. In 1932, the MSAGN was officially changed to the Mississippi Nurses' Association (MNA).