

APNA South Carolina Chapter Election 2026

Candidate Statements

President-Elect

Kerry Peterson, PhD, DNP, PMHCNS-BC, PMHNP-BC, CNE, FAANP

Dr. Kerry Peterson is a Professor and Director of Behavioral Health Practice Initiatives and Education at the Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing. She is a national leader in psychiatric nursing education and practice with significant contributions to improve mental health care for vulnerable and underserved populations as well as violence prevention and interventions across the lifespan. Dr. Peterson is a board certified Psychiatric Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialist (PMHCNS-BC) and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP-BC). Her clinical experience emphasizes psychiatric assessment, psychotherapy, crisis interventions, and trauma-informed care. She has extensive practice expertise working with survivors of abuse as well as evidence-based violence prevention initiatives. Dr. Peterson is a PhD and DNP prepared Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) with over 20 years of teaching experience, as well as progressive leadership within academic nursing and state/national level professional nursing organizations. She developed a new PMHNP program at the University of Colorado (CU) Colorado Springs and held the Psychiatric Mental Health Endowed Professorship at CU Anschutz Medical Campus. Dr. Peterson has served in numerous academic and service leadership positions including Specialty Director of two PMHNP programs, Board of Directors for the American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA), President of the Colorado Chapter of APNA, and President of the Xi Phi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International. She earned her PhD in Nursing from Johns Hopkins University, her DNP, MSN, and BSN from Shenandoah University, and a BA in Psychology from the University of Colorado. Dr. Peterson has received several awards including the Sigma Theta Tau Research Award, the CU Innovation in Teaching Award, the APNA Excellence in Education Award, and the CU Excellence in Leadership award. She is a Fellow in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

Secretary

Maria Henderson, RN

I have been a registered nurse since 2013 and have dedicated most of my nursing career to mental health since entering the field in 2014. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to care for individuals across different areas of psychiatric nursing, including inpatient behavioral health, substance use treatment, and community-based mental health. I

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currently serve as an RN on an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team, working directly with individuals living with serious mental illness in the community. My experiences have shown me that psychiatric nursing is about much more than treating a diagnosis. It is about seeing the person behind the diagnosis, advocating for those whose voices are often overlooked, and meeting people where they are. That is what continues to drive my passion for this profession. I am currently pursuing my Doctor of Nursing Practice to become a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, with the goal of continuing to grow as both a clinician and a leader in mental health care.

I am seeking the opportunity to serve as Secretary of the APNA South Carolina Chapter because I want to become more actively involved in the organization, connect with and support fellow psychiatric nurses, and contribute to the continued growth of our profession. I would bring dedication, organization, dependability, and, most importantly, a genuine passion for psychiatric nursing and the people we serve.

Member-at-Large

Shantana Cooper, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC

My nursing journey began nine years ago when I entered healthcare working in registration. That experience gave me an early appreciation for the many people and roles that contribute to a patient's healthcare experience and ultimately inspired me to pursue nursing. I transitioned into my role as a Registered Nurse in the emergency department, where I developed a strong foundation in clinical decision-making, patient advocacy, teamwork, and leadership.

As my career progressed, I transitioned into inpatient behavioral health, specializing in adolescent psychiatric care. It was there that my passion for mental health grew and ultimately led me to further my education and become a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to serve in several leadership and professional roles, including Charge RN, nurse preceptor, Hospital-Based Council Chair for Mental Health, and member of the DEA Committee. These experiences have strengthened my belief in collaboration, mentorship, advocacy, and creating opportunities for nurses to have a meaningful voice in healthcare.

I joined APNA because I wanted to connect with other psychiatric-mental health professionals, continue learning, stay informed about issues affecting our profession, and become more involved in the psychiatric nursing community.

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I would now love the opportunity to take that involvement a step further by serving the APNA South Carolina Chapter. I hope to bring my clinical experience, leadership background, passion for mental health, and enthusiasm for connecting and supporting others to this role. Most importantly, I look forward to listening to our members, learning from my colleagues, and helping strengthen a professional community where psychiatric nurses across South Carolina can connect, grow, and thrive."

Member-at-Large

Myra Pinckney, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, LPC

I am pleased to submit my candidacy for Member-at-Large on the Board of Directors for the South Carolina Chapter of APNA. Members should vote for me as Member-at-Large because, as a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner serving military veterans, I bring a commitment to compassionate care and evidence-based practice. I would bring a frontline clinical perspective, experience navigating a large federal health system, and a collaborative leadership style grounded in listening before acting. As an African American woman, I value diverse perspectives and opportunities for nurses from all backgrounds to contribute and lead.

My active membership and engagement with APNA extend for more than 10 years. I participate in Chapter meetings and attend national APNA conferences each year. I recently volunteered on the Abstract Review Sub-Committee for the Chapter's upcoming symposium. If elected, I would support member engagement, education, mentorship, and translating evidence into clinical practice. On the board, I would advocate for resources, strengthen APNA's ties with nurses serving Veterans and other high-risk populations, and provide careful governance and financial stewardship. I would be honored to contribute my time and clinical perspective to advancing APNA's mission, strengthening psychiatric-mental health nursing, and improving care for individuals, families, and communities. Thank you for considering my candidacy.