

Proposal 2008-1

Safe Nurse Staffing for Patients and Nurses

Subject

Safe Staffing

Proposed by

Nebraska Nurses Association (NNA) Commission on Advocacy & Representation

Contact Person

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Type of Proposal

New Action Proposal

Rationale

Research findings have found significant direct relationships between the ratio of registered nurses to patients for decreased patient morbidity, mortality, and lengths of hospital stay. [1,2,3,4,5](#)

According to the *ANA's Principles for Nurse Staffing*, the goal of staffing should be to ensure that "the quality of patient care is maintained, the quality of organizational outcomes are met and the quality of nurses' work is acceptable." [6](#)

In 2001 the US General Accountability Office (GAO) cited "inadequate staffing, heavy workloads, the increased use of overtime, a lack of sufficient support staff, and the adequacy of wages" as key factors in the emerging nurse shortage, and an Institute of Medicine (IOM) study in November 2003 called for "better nurse-to-patient ratios, limits on mandatory overtime, and nurse involvement at every level to protect patients." [7, 8](#)

The quality of the work life of the nurse has an impact on the quality of care delivered and nurses' health is being negatively impacted as shown by the 2004 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics which notes that hospitals and nursing and residential care facilities have led the list of industries reporting the highest incidence of worker injury or illness for the past two years and that the rate of illness in workers in the hospital industry was almost three times that of workers in private industry as a whole. [9](#)

Staffing ratios and workload limitations have been shown to improve recruitment and retention of nurses where they have been put in place, creating an influx of 3,300 nurses returning to work full time in Australia within 6 months of the establishment of ratios, a more than 60% increase in license applications in California, and a decline of 47% in resignations and a net increase of RN's of 570% over the previous year once ratios were instituted at Kaiser Permanente in California. [10](#)

ANA's Principles for Nurse Staffing does not recommend specific numeric ratios but recommends taking into account the number of patients and the mix of staff, and other considerations such as the experience level of nurses working on the unit, patient acuity, and support services. [11](#)

Recommendations

The Nebraska Nurses Association shall identify a task force to develop a plan to:

1. Propose legislation that will establish nurse practice staffing parameters and whistleblower protection.
2. The proposed legislation shall address: (1) a standardized acuity-based patient classification system; (2) annual prospective staffing plans based on the standardized acuity system adopted; (3) a hospital-wide nursing care committee with a majority of the committee's membership

consisting of RNs who provide direct patient care in the hospital, and the number of RNs included as members of the committee shall be sufficient to provide adequate representation of all types of nursing care services provided in the hospital; (4) measurement of the sufficiency of staffing on an ongoing basis with collection and analysis of standardized, routinely collected indicators that capture both patient care outcomes and nurse quality of work life outcomes; (5) adequate whistleblower protection for reports of unsafe nursing staffing issues; (6) the availability of copies of its nursing services staffing plan: a) free of charge, a copy of the staffing plan and subsequent changes to the plan shall be provided to each member of the hospital's nursing staff, b) for a fee not to exceed actual copying costs, a copy of the staffing plan shall be provided to any person who requests it, and c) in a conspicuous location in the hospital, a notice shall be posted informing the public of the availability of the staffing plan; the notice shall specify the appropriate person, office, or department to be contacted to review or obtain a copy of the staffing plan.

3. Educate all Nebraska nurses as to the proposed legislation's purpose and benefits.

Past House Actions

None

Relation To Mission and Vision Statements

Directly relates to ANA's and NNA's core issue of Patient Safety/Advocacy.

References

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2. Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, *Healthcare at the Crossroads: Strategies for Addressing the Nursing Crisis*, August 2002.
3. Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the work environment of Nurses*, 2003.
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5. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. *Nurse Staffing and Patient Outcome in Hospitals*. Retrieved June 28, 2005 from <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/staffstudy.htm>.
6. "ANA Calls on Policymakers to Act on Nurse Staffing Legislation Cites New Study that Shows More RN Staff Improve Safety and Quality of Patient Care. Press release Jan. 10, 2006. Retrieved June 28, 2006 from www.nursingworld.org/mrealnews/
6. ANA. *Principles of Nurse Staffing*. American Nurses Publishing. 2000
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8. Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the work environment of Nurses*, Washington DDC: National Academies Press, 2003.
9. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Workplace Injuries and Illnesses in 2004*. (USDL. 05-2195). Washington: DC. Retrieved June 28, 2006 from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/osh_11172005.pdf
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11. "ANA Calls on Policymakers to Act on Nurse Staffing Legislation Cites New Study that Shows More RN Staff Improve Safety and Quality of Patient Care. Press release Jan. 10, 2006 Retrieved June 28, 2006 from www.nursingworld.org/mrealnews/

Proposed Implementation Activities

1. Draft proposed legislation for introduction in the 2009 Legislative Session.
2. Collaborate with hospital and health care focused organizations and health care facility administration on educating Nebraskan nurses.

Range of Direct Costs

None

Funding Available From Alternative Sources

Not known at this time.