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FNA Position Paper 2015

Nurse Staffing Committees in Hospitals

Legislation being proposed by the Florida Nurses Association (FNA) would establish committees in hospitals that would develop, review and revise staffing plans for patient care units. This approach promotes collaboration between hospitals and direct care nurses in establishing staffing levels based on the unique circumstances and changing needs of patient care units.

The Nurse Staffing Committees would establish staffing plans twice a year, based on the following factors:

- The number of patients in each unit for each shift, and patient needs based on the intensity of their care;
- the level of education, training and experience of the nurses, as well as their skill mix (certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses);
- availability of equipment, including protective equipment;
- layout of the hospital unit;
- evidence-based staffing information and guidelines adopted or published by national nursing professional associations, specialty nursing associations and other health professional organizations;
- the hospital's staffing budget.

The committee's responsibilities include reviewing employee injuries or illnesses that occur during the performance of nursing duties and determining if staffing was a contributing factor. The committee will also be responsible for reviewing *unexpected* occurrences of patient death or injury (called a "sentinel event") and determine if nurse staffing levels were a contributing factor. "Sentinel event" will be defined by the hospital under this legislation.

Ensuring adequate staffing levels in hospitals has been shown to:

- ✓ Reduce medical and medication errors
- ✓ Decrease patient complications
- ✓ Decrease mortality
- ✓ Improve patient satisfaction
- ✓ Reduce nurse fatigue
- ✓ Decrease nurse burnout
- ✓ Improve nurse retention and job satisfaction