**Position Statement**

**Patient Safety**

Approved September 1995
Revised August 2003

**Summary:**
Registered nurses have important roles to play in assuring patient safety. These include:
- Professional accountability regarding licensure;
- Appropriate reporting;
- Delegating appropriately; and
- Participating in work design

**Background:**

**Professional Accountability Regarding Licensure:** Nursing licensure carries an accountability to provide safe nursing care including performing nursing activities and providing nursing supervision in the planning for and provision of nursing care to patients. The Arizona State Board of Nursing's definition of unprofessional conduct includes, but is not limited to, "Any conduct or practice that is or might be harmful or dangerous to the health of a patient or the public." The state practice act also requires nurses to report to the state board of nursing any information which appears to show that a professional or practical nurse may be a threat to public health or safety. The nurse must use professional judgment in determining whether a pattern of practice exists which consistently jeopardizes the patient. To fail to report is an act of unprofessional conduct.

**Appropriate Reporting:** When a nurse believes that an unsafe situation exists, the following guidelines should be considered:
- Talk objectively and professionally with the immediate supervisor, expressing concern for patient safety and reasons for the concern.
- In the absence of a satisfactory response, present oral and written concerns through the chain of command. There should be an institutional procedure for employees to use in this situation. Document actions taken and retain copies of written communication.
- Talk with representatives of the Arizona Nurses Association (480-831-0404) and the Arizona State Board of Nursing to clarify concerns. When indicated, file a complaint beyond the employer. This could include the state board of nursing, state agencies, the attorney general, the insurance commissioner or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

**Delegating Appropriately:** The Arizona State Board of Nursing’s Rule reads, “A professional nurse shall be responsible both for the nursing care directly provided by the nurse and the care provided by others who are under the professional nurse’s supervision.” Certain nursing functions may not be delegated; other may be delegated only in certain situations.

Delegation does not relieve the nurse of the ultimate responsibility for that nursing care. It is the responsibility of the registered nurse to validate that the person to whom a task is delegated comprehends the assigned responsibilities, possesses the appropriate educational preparation and demonstrates competency. Key considerations are:
- Assessing the patient and the caregiver
- Educating the caregiver about the task to be assigned
- Communicating expectations about the activity and expected outcomes
- Observing the activity at least the first time it is performed
- Evaluating outcomes whenever activities are performed

It is always the registered nurse’s decision when, what and to whom to delegate.

**Participating in Work Design:** Nurses can advocate for practice and patient care through participation in work design and redesign. Standards of practice should be maintained. Appropriate, adequate training and retraining should be expected for all health care...
personnel. Policies for reporting of problems should be in writing and understood by all personnel. Standards for safe and appropriate delegation should be maintained. Expected outcomes of work redesign should be identified. Nurses should monitor those outcomes as well as other quality of care studies carried out by the institution. Where work redesign outcomes are not satisfactory, the redesign process needs adjustment.

References:


Arizona Revised Statutes ARS Title 36, Chapter 4, Article 11. Patient Safety Reporting and Nonretaliatory Policies