



WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION

Fact Sheet on Nurse Staffing Law

September 8, 2008

Nurse Staffing Committee Composition:

- By September 1, 2008, every hospital must establish a nurse staffing committee.
- The hospital can either create a new committee or assign the functions of a nurse staffing committee to an existing committee.
- At least one-half of the members of the nurse staffing committee must be RNs currently providing direct patient care.
- Up to one-half of the members of the nurse staffing committee will be hospital management representatives.
- Staff nurses participation in the committee must be scheduled work time, compensated at the appropriate rate of pay, and relieved of all other work duties.

Primary Functions of the Committee:

- Development and oversight of a nurse staffing plan for each unit and shift of the hospital based on patient care needs, appropriate skill mix of registered nurses and other nursing personnel, layout of the unit, and national standards and recommendations on nurse staffing.
- Semiannual review of the staffing plan against patient need and known evidence-based staffing information, including the nursing sensitive quality indicators collected by the hospital.
- Review, assessment, and response to staffing concerns presented to the committee.

Role of Committee:

- The Committee shall produce the hospital's annual nurse staffing plan.
- If this staffing plan is not adopted by the hospital, the chief executive officer must provide a written explanation of the reasons why to the Committee.

Posting:

- Hospitals must post the nurse staffing plan and the nurse staffing schedule for that shift on that unit, as well as the relevant clinical staffing for that shift in a public area on each unit.
- The staffing plan and current staffing levels must be made available to patients and visitors upon request.

Non-retaliation:

- Hospitals may not retaliate or intimidate an employee for performing any duties or responsibilities in connection with the nurse staffing committee; or
- Hospitals may not retaliate or intimidate an employee, patient, or other individual who notifies the nurse staffing committee or the hospital administration of his or her concerns on nurse staffing.