



Position Statement on Nurse Staffing Practices and Ratios

The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (PONL) is committed to nurse staffing practices that support the provision of safe patient care. PONL strongly endorses the autonomy of each organization to establish strategies needed to guarantee safe, effective, and collaborative staffing practices and deliver high caliber patient care.

PONL Beliefs Regarding Best Nurse Staffing Practices

- PONL believes that nurse staffing is a complex issue that requires flexibility, skilled judgment, and decision making. **PONL continues to be adamantly opposed to any legislation mandating the establishment of nurse to patient ratios requiring fixed nursing ratios.**
- PONL believes that multiple factors must be considered in determining safe staffing needs in order to provide quality and safe patient care and that these factors are often unique to the specific facility and/or unit. The factors include skill and competency level of staff, professional benchmarking standards, availability of support staff, skill mix, the number of patients, acuity of patients, admission/discharge/transfer activity, patient educational needs, geographical set up of the unit, supporting technology, case mix, discharge planning, to name a few. No legislative mandate can take these factors into account.
- PONL believes that mandated staffing ratios discounts the ability to plan for unexpected staffing needs, which is a critical component of any staffing plan.
- PONL believes that the most effective way to attain superior patient outcomes and enhance nurse satisfaction is for nurse leaders and nursing staff to continually and openly communicate, assess, plan, execute and evaluate strategies used in the provision of patient care, using benchmark standards, evidence-based decisions, and transparency.
- PONL encourages the use of benchmark staffing standards that are widely available and nationally utilized from professional specialty organizations and other reputable sources, such as the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI), to develop staffing plans that are constructed on an evidence-based platform, proactive, fiscally responsible, and continually evaluated and adjusted to achieve desired results.
- PONL recognizes that the accountability for safe and effective nurse staffing is the ultimate responsibility of chief nursing officers, who are invested with authority and accountability for the provision of safe nursing care within their jurisdiction.

- PONL supports ongoing research that identifies appropriate, accurate, easy to use acuity systems that incorporate the patient’s direct needs, and the activity on the individual nursing units, geography of the unit, education, experience of the nursing staff, and staffing mix.
- PONL supports the American Organization of Nurse Executives’ (AONE) 2018 *Policy Statement on Nurse Staffing* that “... mandated nurse staffing ratios are a static and ineffective tool that cannot guarantee a safe health care environment or quality level to achieve optimum patient outcomes.... [and] Mandated approaches to nurse staffing limit this innovation and increase stress on a health care system already facing an escalating shortage of educated nurses.”
- PONL supports the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania statement from 2015 opposing Nurse-to-Patient Ratios, noting “... multiple factors determine the staffing needs of individual hospitals, and each facility needs ongoing flexibility to provide the best care for its patients.”

References/Resources

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