



Nebraska Board of Nursing

ADVISORY OPINION

OPINION: Temporary
Assignments/Floating
ADOPTED: January, 2008
REVISED: 12/13
REAFFIRMED:

This Nebraska Board of Nursing advisory opinion is issued in accordance with the Nebraska Nurse Practice Act, [Neb. Rev. Stat. 38-2216 \(2\)](#). As such, this advisory opinion is for informational purposes only and is non-binding. The advisory opinions define acts, which in the opinion of the board, are or are not permitted in the practice of nursing.

Safety to Practice: Temporary Assignments, Floating

Licensed nurses are accountable for the care they provide and must have the appropriate knowledge and skills before accepting assignments or responsibilities. The Nebraska Nurse Practice Act states each nurse is directly accountable and responsible to the patient/client for the quality of nursing care rendered. Accepting an assignment and providing care without the appropriate knowledge and skills places both the recipient of the care and the licensed nurse in jeopardy.

It is the nurse's responsibility to determine whether she/he is clinically competent to perform the nursing care required on a different unit or ~~with a new~~ patient population. If the nurse is not clinically competent to perform the care, she/he should not accept the patient care assignment. The nurse may accept a limited assignment of nursing care duties, which utilizes his/her currently existing clinical competence. The nurse's license may be subject to discipline for accepting an assignment for which he/she is not competent to perform safely.

The nurse should work with nursing leaders (administrators, supervisors, and managers) to ensure appropriate and competent nursing care to patients/clients. Nursing leaders are required to assign patient care ~~only~~ to nurses who are clinically competent. Nurse leaders may be subject to discipline if they do not ensure assignment of clinically competent nursing staff.

Employers should take steps to provide adequate orientation and cross-training before assigning licensed nurses to areas outside of their usual work assignment. Such orientation and cross-training must occur prior to the expected reassignment. If a facility's census requires a nurse to "float" to unfamiliar clinical settings, the nurse should be assigned to work with another licensed nurse who has the requisite knowledge and skills to provide the specialized care.

References:

American Nurses Association Position Statement: The Right to Accept or Reject an Assignment, July 1995.

<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy/Positions-and-Resolutions/ANAPositionStatements/Position-Statements-Alphabetically/Patient-Safety-Rights-of-Registered-Nurses-When-Considering-a-Patient-Assignment.htm>

California RN Board of Nursing Position Statement: RN Responsibility When Floating to a New Patient Care Unit or Assigned to a New Patient Population. <http://www.rn.ca.gov/pdfs/regulations/npr-b-21.pdf>

North Dakota Board of Nursing Practice Statement: Temporary Reassignments.

<https://www.ndbon.org/opinions/temporary%20reassignment.asp>

Texas Board of Nursing Position Statement: The Duty of a Nurse in Any Practice Setting.

<http://www.bon.state.tx.us/practice/position.html#15.14>