

NAON Position Statement

Principles of a Healthful Work Environment for Nurses

Issue

Workforce challenges, the increasing growth of our older population with the associated need for health care, and the continual development of new medical technologies all demand a supportive, empowering work environment that values and nurtures continuous organizational learning and innovation (AONE, 2003). McCauley notes that there is increasing evidence that unhealthy work environments contribute to medical errors, ineffective delivery of care, and conflict and stress among health professionals (American Association for Critical Care Nurses, 2005). As patients require increasingly complex care, it is essential that the environment support the efforts of the nurse to provide quality care and that the health and safety of the nurse not be compromised.

NAON's Position

The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) promotes a healthy work environment for all nurses. To optimize the safety, effectiveness and productivity of nursing care the work environment must provide strong leadership, appropriate resources and a supportive milieu.

Background/Rationale

Existing workforce challenges have prompted organizations to examine the environment of nursing practice and to identify strategies to promote retention of staff, delivery of quality care, and fiscal responsibility. Based upon a research project undertaken by McManis and Monsalve Associates in partnership with the American Organization of Nurse Executives (2003) six factors were identified as "essential" for achieving an excellent work environment for nurses. These six factors are: leadership development and effectiveness; empowered collaborative decision making; work design and service delivery innovation; values driven culture; professional growth and accountability; and a recognition and reward system.

Similarly, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses has published six standards for establishing and sustaining a healthy work environment. These standards address skilled communication, collaboration between health care providers, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership (American Association for Critical Care Nurses, 2005).

In addition to promoting a professional environment for nursing practice it is also important that the environment minimize health risks for the nurse. This means that appropriate resources and equipment needs to be available to ensure such things as infection control, safe-handling of sharps, effective use of assistive equipment and devices for patient handling, safe transit throughout the healthcare setting, appropriate storage and use of chemicals, and a work environment that is conducive to one's health such as appropriate air flow, lighting, room temperature, and flooring.

The American Nurses Association (2008) believes that manual patient handling is unsafe and is directly responsible for musculoskeletal disorders suffered by nurses. Patient handling can be performed safely with the use of assistive equipment and devices that decrease the physical burden on the nurse and ensure safety and comfort of the patient.

A healthy environment that supports the efforts of a nurse to provide quality care promotes patient safety, nursing practice consistent with the values of the profession, the safety and well-being of the nurse, collaboration with other health care providers, opportunities for professional development, and is related to patient care outcomes. As well, a healthy work environment encompasses support and opportunities for nurses to achieve clinical expertise, leadership development, and professional recognition (Vollers et al., 2009). As noted by Kramer and Schmalenberg, (2008) "a healthy work environment is the totality of all factors that influence satisfaction and performance of the job."

References

- American Association for Critical-Care Nurses. (2005). *Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environment*. [Http://www.aacn.org/aacn/WD/HWE/Docs/HWEStandards.pdf](http://www.aacn.org/aacn/WD/HWE/Docs/HWEStandards.pdf)
- American Nurses Association. (2008). Position Statement: *Elimination of manual patient handling to prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Organization of Nurse Executives. (2003). Healthy Work environments, Vol II: Striving for excellence. http://www.aone.org/aone/keyissues/hwe_excellence.html
- Kramer, M. & Schmalenberg, C. (2008). Confirmation of a healthy work environment. *Critical Care Nurse*, 28(2), 56-63.
- Vollers, D., Hill, E., Roberts, C., Dambaugh, L. & Brenner, Z. R. (2009). AACN's healthy work environment standards and an empowering nurse advancement system. *Critical Care Nurse*, 29(6), 20-27.

Links for additional resources/information

- AACN's Healthy Work Environments Initiative.
<http://www.aacn.org/WD/HWE/Content/hwehome.pcms?menu=Community>
- American Nurses Associations: Position States on Workplace Advocacy
<http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/HealthcareandPolicyIssues/ANAPositionStatements/workplace.aspx>
- de Castro, A.B. (2004). Handle with Care: The American Nurses Association's campaign to address work-related musculoskeletal disorders. *Online J Issues Nurs*. 9(3).
<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Volume92004/No3Sept04/HandleWithCare.aspx>
- The ANA Code of Ethics – a healthy work environment
<http://classic.aacn.org/aacn/practice.nsf/ad0ca3b3bdb4f33288256981006fa692/1d4c4ffae686a8608825709f007cb554?OpenDocument>