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POWER



Behind Your Clinical Practice

Filing an Unsafe Staffing Form is Key to Protecting Your Practice

There is a very important tool that all MNA union members may use to document any concerns they have about their practice of nursing or their role in that practice while at work. That tool is the "Objection and Documentation of Unsafe Staffing/Unsatisfactory Patient Care" form which is available to all RNs in the hospital when they want to put down in writing concerns he/she has about staffing or working conditions with which they may be dealing.

Why fill out this form?

There are two very important reasons: first, this form has been identified by your union (and by management) as a means of documenting problems with staffing and second, it may be the single piece of evidence that could save your license to practice your profession if something happened to one of your patients on a shift where staffing was unsafe.

Documenting Problems to Be Solved

When your elected union leaders sit down to discuss staffing issues with management, we need documented evidence to present as part of our case for improvements in staffing levels. Objection and Documentation of Unsafe Staffing/Unsatisfactory

Patient Care forms provide a detailed record of the type of problems that are occurring, and on what shifts these problems arise. There have been numerous occasions where these forms allowed us to identify a problem for management and to engage in a dialogue that led to improvements.

Protecting Your License

Consider the fact that the Board of Registration in Nursing and a Civil Court hold individual nurses accountable for the safety of their patients. In the event that a patient is harmed due to care on your shift and you are sued or brought before the Nursing Board in relation to a complaint about your care, an unsafe staffing form provides documented evidence that you were working under duress, that you took the responsibility to notify your supervisor of your objection to these conditions, and also spells out what actions were taken or not taken to support you. This evidence might prove extremely valuable in defense of your license.

How to Use the Form

Please note the following steps when and if you choose to use this essential tool.

- Obtain an unsafe staffing form. Talk to a union representative to

make sure you have a supply on your unit.

- Determine that the staffing or a situation is one that you believe compromises your nursing practice. If you feel the staffing level is unsafe, then it is unsafe. Fill out the form.
- Notify your supervisor that you are concerned and are going to document your concerns on an unsafe staffing form.
- Fill the form out as completely as possible, including who you notified (all other data is helpful, do not forget the date/time and reason for your concern or objection). Be careful not to include any patient-specific information which might violate HIPAA regulations.
- Make three copies: leave one with your manager, keep one for yourself, and give the third to a member of your union negotiating committee.

The use of this form as a tool to express your concerns is a legally protected right as a union member. This tool cannot be the basis for discipline. As nurses, we know that documentation is a key function of our nursing practice. For unionized nurses, the unsafe staffing form is a key tool for documenting the safety of your practice environment. Use it!