

American Nurses Association 2006 House of Delegates

Resolution

Workplace Abuse and Harassment of Nurses

WHEREAS, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) defines abuse as behavior that humiliates, degrades or otherwise indicates a lack of respect for the dignity and worth of an individual and the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) states that abuse can take the form of intimidating behaviors such as condescending language, impatience, angry outbursts, reluctance or refusal to answer questions, threatening body language and physical contact. The emotional impact of abusiveness demoralizes people and can leave the victim feeling personally and/or professionally attacked, devalued, or humiliated.

WHEREAS, abusive behavior and/or abuse of authority and position can occur in any setting where nurses practice both domestically and internationally; and

WHEREAS, the International Council of Nurses states that:

- All forms of abuse and violence against nursing personnel, including sexual harassment, shall be condemned;
- Incidents of abuse against nursing personnel are considered to be violations of nurses' rights to personal dignity and integrity;
- Abuse and violence in the health workplace threatens the delivery of effective patient services;
- If quality care is to be provided, nursing personnel must be ensured a safe work environment and respectful treatment; and

WHEREAS, the American Association of Critical Care Nurses condemns acts of abuse perpetrated by or against any person and demands a zero-tolerance stance on any abuse and disrespect in the workplace; and

WHEREAS, the American Nurses Association established a *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* which mandates that registered nurses:

- Respect the inherent worth, dignity, and human rights of every individual;
- Maintain compassionate and caring relationships with colleagues and others with a commitment to the fair treatment of individuals, to integrity-preserving compromise, and to resolving conflict
- Be responsible for creating, maintaining, and contributing to environments that support the growth of virtues and excellences and enable nurses to fulfill their ethical obligations; and

WHEREAS, the same *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* mandates that professional organizations:

- Support and assist nurses who report unethical, incompetent, illegal, or impaired practice and to protect the practice of those who choose to voice their concerns.
- Maintain vigilance and take action to bring about social change and speak for nurses collectively on issues such as violations of human rights; and

WHEREAS, the same *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* is not open to negotiation and may supersede specific policies of institutions, of employers, or of practices; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the American Nurses Association shall adopt the following principles related to nursing practice and the promotion of healthy work environments for all nurses:

- that all nursing personnel have the right to work in healthy work environments free of abusive behavior such as bullying, hostility, lateral abuse and violence, sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse of authority and position and reprisal for speaking out against abuses; and
- that the language of The Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements is nonnegotiable and the ethical precepts of the Code encompasses all nursing activities in all settings in which nurses practice, learn, teach, research, and lead, and may supersede specific policies of institutions, of employers, or of practice; and
- the registered nurse should report promptly incidents of abuse and advocate that no employee who experiences and reports workplace abuse faces reprisal; and
- registered nurses should advocate for the implementation of policies that support abuse free, harassment free and violence-free workplaces through a comprehensive workplace security and violence prevention program, and
- the registered nurse should take appropriate action following an incident of abusive behavior to prevent recurrence of similar incidents; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the American Nurses Association shall condemn abuse and harassment of nurses in professional associations and in all work environments in which nurses practice, including abuse and harassment, based on age, color, creed, disability, gender, health status, lifestyle, nationality, race, religion, or sexual orientation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the American Nurses Association, through and/or along with the constituent member associations, shall provide guidance and support for nurses who speak out about abuses, abuse of authority and position, and suffer reprisal for speaking out against such abuses and promote appropriate activities that support whistle blowing surrounding these issues.

RESOLVED, that the American Nurses Association address workplace abuse and harassment through its nationwide state legislative agenda.