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Looking forward to 2017

Clinical Nurse Specialists

A CNS is considered by many states and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing as an advanced practice nurse just as nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and nurse anesthetists. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also recognizes CNSs as prescribers. In fact, 38 percent of Medicare Part B providers are nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified registered nurse anesthetists.

But Florida law does not recognize the CNS as one of four advanced practice nurses. It only recognizes Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs), nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives. This means that a CNS licensed outside of Florida will lose all advanced practice nursing privileges, including prescribing privileges, when relocating to practice in our state. Even though the CNS primarily practices in hospital settings, the Florida CNS cannot even prescribe basic medications such as antibiotics.

The Florida Nurses Association (FNA) supports inclusion of the CNS in Florida Statute 464.003 under the definition of “Advanced or specialized nursing practice.” The FNA also supports prescriptive authority for the CNS to be in alignment with the current prescriptive authority of other advanced practice nurses.

Nurse Staffing Committees in Hospitals

FNA supports the establishment of committees in hospitals that would develop, review, and revise staffing plans for patient care units. The staffing plans would be based on the number of patients in each unit per shift; the patient needs based on the intensity of their care; the level of education, training and experience of nurses; the skill mix of certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses, and other criteria.

This approach promotes collaboration between hospitals and direct care nurses in establishing staffing levels based on the unique circumstances and changing needs of patient care units.

The committee would also review employee and patient injuries or illnesses that occur during the performance of nursing duties and determining if staffing was a contributing factor. Ensuring adequate staffing levels in hospitals has been shown to reduce medical and medication errors, decrease patient complications; decrease mortality; improve patient satisfaction; reduce nurse fatigue; decrease nurse burnout; and improve nurse retention and job satisfaction.