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**FNA Position Paper 2016**

## **Take the Scare Out of Care: End Violence Against Nurses**

The Florida Nurses Association (FNA) supports shared roles and responsibilities of nurses, employers, lawmakers, and the community to create and sustain a culture of respect that is free of workplace violence. Nurses, employers, lawmakers, and members of the community have an ethical, moral, and legal responsibility to create a healthy and safe work environment for nurses and all members of the health care team, health care consumers, families, and communities. Violence against nurses in the line of duty must end and will no longer be tolerated.

Attacks on nurses are far more common than people realize, and nurses should not have to fear for their safety while performing their jobs. Violence is not part of their job description. Sadly, nurses often ignore or tolerate workplace violence because of fear or lack of knowledge. They commonly leave or plan to leave the profession due to workplace violence.

According to a recent American Nurses Association survey of 3,765 registered nurses and nursing students, 43% of respondents have been verbally and/or physically threatened by a patient or family member of a patient. Additionally, 24% of respondents have been physically assaulted by a patient or family member of a patient while at work. Workplace violence can lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, added direct and indirect costs to employers and nurses, decreased personal health, emotional distress, temporary or permanent injury, or even death. Workplace violence also contributes to an unhealthy work environment that ultimately has a negative impact on the quality and safety of health care delivery. Examples of workplace violence include direct physical assaults (with or without weapons), written or verbal threats, physical or verbal harassment, and homicide.

A safe environment promotes physical and psychological well-being. If members of the health care team do not feel safe, the work environment is left vulnerable, and everyone's safety is compromised.

Nurses, employers, community members, and lawmakers must come together to identify specific issues and to create a plan of action. Prevention involves involve education and other measures to identify and reduce vulnerabilities in order to prevent workplace violence from occurring.

We must educate the public that violence against nurses will not be tolerated in health care settings. We must also urge nurses to report perpetrators to the proper authorities. Hospitals and other facilities where nurses work need to implement policies and procedures that protect nurses

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and punish offenders. Additionally, laws must enhance penalties of assault and battery committed against nurses in the line of duty. Current law provides enhanced penalties against aggressors who attack nurses and other healthcare workers and emergency responders in emergency rooms, but not in other locations. We must also encourage law enforcement officers and state attorneys to arrest, charge, and prosecute perpetrators.