

FAQ for RNs

HOW DO I MAINTAIN PATIENT SAFETY DURING A JOB ACTION?

The NANB¹ recognizes the right of registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) to be active participants in the collective bargaining process which may include a job action. However, RNs and NPs must weigh their right to job action while upholding the safety of clients and public trust in the profession.

The *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (CNA, 2008) states that when a job action occurs, registered nurses take steps to safeguard the health and safety of clients during the course of the action. Furthermore, registered nurses and nurse practitioners, as regulated members of the NANB, are responsible for exercising professional nursing judgement in all decisions that impact client care, as specified in their standards of practice, employer policies and relevant legislation.

Responsibilities and Accountability during a job action

During a job action, RNs and NPs are expected to maintain patient safety by:

- practising in accordance with relevant legislation, standards, employer policies and the *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (Standard 1 - Indicators 1.2 & 1.3);
- contributing to and promoting measures that optimize positive client health outcomes at the individual, organizational and system level (Standard 3);
- demonstrating professionalism and upholding the public's trust in the profession (Standard 4 - Indicator 4.1);
- recognizing and taking action in situations where client safety is actually or potentially compromised (Standard 1-indicator 1.7);
- engaging in a client-centered care² approach to ensure that all behaviours and actions meet the therapeutic needs of the client;
- taking steps to safeguard the health and safety of people during the course of job action;
- being answerable for nursing actions, decisions and professional conduct (Standard 1 - Indicator 1.5) in all circumstances including a legal or an illegal job action;
- practising safely, competently and ethically and is accountable to the client, employer, profession and the public (Standard 1) regardless of the work situation;
- discussing expectations with the client in meeting goals identified in the healthcare plan in the context of the client's health status and available resources;

¹ The Nurses Association of New Brunswick is a professional regulatory organization that exists to protect the public and support the practice of registered nurses and nurse practitioners. Through the *Nurses Act*, the nursing profession is granted the authority to set standards for education and practice of its members, with an obligation to protect the public and serve the public interest.

² Client-Centered Care: An approach in which clients are viewed as whole; it is not merely about delivering services where the client is located. Client-centered care involves advocacy, empowerment, and respecting the client's autonomy, voice, self-determination, and participation in decision-making.

- supporting the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of every client; and
- not abandoning³ clients.

During a job action, if registered nurses or nurse practitioners have any concern about their ability to maintain practice and ethical standards and/or their ability to ensure client safety, they have the obligation to communicate this concern following the established lines of communication in the workplace so that corrective actions can be implemented.

If during the job action the practice or action of an RN/NP is believed to be in violation of the Standards of Practice or the Code of Ethics and putting patient safety at risk, members of the public, employers or other health care professionals have a right to submit a complaint to the NANB using the established process.

References

Canadian Nurses Association (2008). *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. Ottawa: Author.

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2011). *The Therapeutic Nurse Client Relationship: Practice Standard*. Fredericton: Author.

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2013). *When RNs are expected to work with Limited Resources*. Fredericton: Author

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2012.) *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses*. Fredericton: Author.

³ Abandon/Abandonment: Occurs when the registered nurse has engaged with a client or has accepted an assignment and then discontinues care without:

- i. negotiating a mutually acceptable withdrawal of service with the client; or
- ii. arranging for suitable or replacement services; or
- iii allowing the employer a reasonable opportunity for alternative or replacement services to be provided