



Arizona State Board of Nursing

4747 North 7th Street, Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85014-3655
Phone (602) 889-5150 Fax - (602) 889-5155
E-Mail: arizona@azbn.gov
Home Page: www.azbn.gov

An advisory opinion adopted by AZBN is an interpretation of what the law requires. While an advisory opinion is not law, it is more than a recommendation. In other words, an advisory opinion is an official opinion of AZBN regarding the practice of nursing as it relates to the functions of nursing. Facility policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations related to competency, validation, training, and supervision to assure the safety of their patient population and or decrease risk.

OPINION: ABANDONMENT OF PATIENTS
APPROVED: 11/02
REVISED DATE: 3/06, 11/09, 9/12
ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:
SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

Within the Scope of Practice of RN LPN

ADVISORY OPINION **ABANDONMENT OF PATIENTS**

STATEMENT OF SCOPE

Registered Nurses (RN) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) are required to provide reasonable notice to the supervisor before severing the nurse-patient relationship, so that arrangements can be made for continuation of nursing care by others. Terminating the nurse-patient relationship without adequate & reasonable notice constitutes patient abandonment. The term "patient abandonment" should be differentiated from the term "employment abandonment", which becomes a matter of the employer-employee relationship and is not within the jurisdiction of the Board of Nursing. The following requirements define patient abandonment:

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. The nurse must have first ACCEPTED the patient assignment, thus establishing a nurse-patient relationship. Accepting a patient assignment varies from setting to setting and requires a clear understanding of workload and agreement to provide care, AND then
- B. DISENGAGED the nurse-patient relationship without giving reasonable notice and report to the qualified person (e.g. supervisor, nurse) so that arrangements can be made for continuation of nursing care.
- C. Transfer of patient care requires directly reporting the condition, circumstances and needs of all patients under the nurses' care, in oral or written form, to another nurse who acknowledges receipt and understanding of the report.
- D. Examples of patient abandonment include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Leaving without giving the supervisor or qualified person adequate & reasonable notice
 - (2) Leaving without giving report to a qualified person
 - (3) Accepting an assignment of patient care and then leaving the nursing unit or patient care setting without notifying a qualified person
- E. Situations NOT considered to be patient abandonment, but are examples of employer-employee or contract issues of which the Board has no jurisdiction (salary, work conditions, hiring and termination policies):
 - (1) No call/no show for work
 - (2) Refusal to accept an assignment or a nurse-patient relationship
 - (3) Refusal to work overtime

- (4) Refusal to work additional hours or shifts
- (5) Ending the employer-employee relationship without providing the employer with a period of time to obtain replacement staff for that specific position
- (6) Refusal to work in an unfamiliar, specialized, or “high tech” area when there has been no orientation, no educational preparation or employment experience
- (7) Resigning from a position and not fulfilling the remaining posted work schedule
- (8) Refusal to “float” to an unfamiliar unit to accept a full patient assignment

II. RATIONALE

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses maintain a responsibility to protect the health, safety and well-being of their patients. Clear communication between staff and supervisors is essential to ensure continuity of care. Terminating the nurse-patient relationship without adequate notice constitutes patient abandonment and places the patient at risk for harm. This Advisory Opinion is intended to provide the nursing community with guidelines to clarify those circumstances which may be characterized as patient abandonment. “Patient abandonment” should not be confused with “employment abandonment” which is not within the Board’s jurisdiction.

III. REFERENCES

American Nurses Association (2009). Position statement: Patient safety: Rights of registered nurses when considering a patient assignment. Retrieved from www.nursingworld.org/rnrighps

Other states with advisory opinions/position statements that support this advisory opinion:

California Board of Nursing, Position Statement. Reviewed April 2011.

Kentucky Board of Nursing, Advisory Opinion Statement. Reviewed March 2011.

Maryland Board of Nursing, Position Statement. Revised July 2011.

Mississippi Board of Nursing, Position Statement 2011.

Texas Board of Nursing, Position Statement 15.6. Revised January 2012.

Vermont Board of Nursing, Position Statement. Revised September 2010.

Virginia Board of Nursing, Guidance Document #90-41. Revised November 2003.

Statewide Strategic Plan for Nursing in the state of Arizona, AZ Governor’s Task Force on the Nursing Shortage – 2004.