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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: X NOT APPROVED:
DATE: 11/02
REVISED DATE: 3/06
ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:
SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

ADVISORY OPINION ABANDONMENT OF PATIENTS

It is the position of the Arizona Board of Nursing that for patient abandonment to occur, the nurse must:

- A. 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 (supervisor, nurse, etc.) so that others can make arrangements for continuation of nursing care.

Examples of patient abandonment include, but are not limited to:

- Leaving without giving the supervisor or qualified person adequate notice
- Leaving without giving report to a qualified person
- Accepting an assignment of patient care and then leaving the nursing unit or patient care setting without notifying the qualified person

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):

- No call/no show for work
- Refusal to work mandatory overtime
- Refusal to accept an assignment or a nurse-patient relationship
- Refusal to work additional hours or shifts
- Ending the employer-employee relationship without providing the employer with a period of time to obtain replacement staff for that specific position
- Refusal to work in an unfamiliar, specialized, or "high tech" area when there has been no orientation, no educational preparation or employment experience
- Resigning from a position and not fulfilling the remaining posted work schedule
- Refusal to float to an unfamiliar unit to accept a full patient assignment

RATIONALE

To provide the nursing community with guidelines to clarify those circumstances which may be characterized as patient-abandonment.

REFERENCES

Arizona Board Newsletter, 2001
California Board of Nursing, 2001
Mississippi Board of Nursing 2001
Georgia Board of Nursing 2001