



Illinois Hospitals Committed to Nurses and Patients

Hospitals across Illinois are engaged in a variety of efforts to create an excellent workplace environment and provide rewarding career opportunities for nurses. As part of that commitment to nurses, IHA and the hospital community have worked with the General Assembly and the Illinois Nurses Association and other advocacy groups to support the enactment of several landmark pieces of legislation designed to enhance nurses' work environment, increase the nurse supply, and promote patient safety.

Illinois has enacted groundbreaking, comprehensive and extensive legislation. Each of these laws reflect the concerns of both staff nurses and hospitals to best serve and facilitate the consistent delivery of quality patient care. Below is a summary of the laws:

The first law of its kind in the country, the **Hospital Report Card Act (HRCA)** (PA93-0563) is intended to provide Illinois consumers a picture of each hospital's nurse staffing process and effectiveness as it relates to a critical public interest – patient outcomes. The HRCA provides consumers access to useful information about nursing coverage and patient outcomes. The HRCA requires Illinois hospitals to share their current unit schedules, nurse-patient assignment rosters, and the methodologies to determine and adjust staffing levels with the public upon request. In addition, hospitals are required to report extensive nurse staffing information and infection measures to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) for public disclosure.

Illinois became the 11th state to **prohibit the use of nurse mandated overtime** in hospitals with the enactment of PA94-0349. Only in the event of an unforeseen emergent circumstance may nurses be required to work overtime and then only for four hours beyond a nurse's predetermined, agreed-to work shift. Should they choose to do so, nurses are able to voluntarily assume extra hours beyond their regularly assigned work schedules.

Illinois became only the third state in the nation to enact **Adverse Health Care Event Reporting** (PA94-0242.) This legislation requires hospitals and Ambulatory Surgery Treatment Centers to report certain adverse health care events to IDPH along with a root cause analysis and the health care facility's plan of action intended to address the root causes and a corrective action plan. These reportable events are called "never" events because the goal is that they should never happen. The list includes: surgical events, product or device events, patient protection events, care management events, environmental events, and physical security events and were based on the recommendations of the National Quality Forum. In order to fully implement this law, IDPH was required to implement rules which are expected to be published in the coming weeks.

Housed within the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, the **Illinois Center for Nursing (ICN)** was created by PA94-1020. The ICN works with industry professionals and educational institutions to ensure that Illinois has the nursing workforce necessary to meet the demands of a growing and aging population. The ICN is examining the current demand for nurses,

the number of nurses our educational system is producing, the rate of nurses retiring, and the needs of the overall nursing workforce to better understand the state of the nursing shortage in Illinois. The ICN is also developing strategic initiatives to recruit new nurses, offer ongoing training to practicing nurses to ensure constant skill development, retain nursing professionals currently practicing, and promote excellence in nursing education.

Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity (PA95-0401) addresses staff planning using a hospital's acuity model, based on recommendations from a nursing care committee comprised of 50% direct care nurses. This law **assures direct care staff a significant voice in the nurse staffing process**; aligns staffing considerations based on patient needs and nursing resources; reinforces an evidence-based approach to nurse staffing; and recognizes the diverse staffing needs from patients needing care in a wide range of hospital settings, from large academic medical centers to smaller, critical access hospitals and all points in between.

Enacted this year, the **Safe Patient Handling Act** (PA96-0389) requires hospitals and nursing homes to adopt and implement a safe patient handling policy. Health care professionals providing direct patient care are vulnerable to back and other musculoskeletal injuries related to awkward positioning when manually lifting, transferring and moving patients. This new Illinois law supports the work of nurses and other health care workers by mandating the development and implementation of safe patient handling strategies and procedures for minimizing risks, including targeted training and consideration of assistive equipment and friction-reducing devices for those nurses and others engaged in patient care. The law also requires each organization to review their architectural plans for remodeling and new construction to address safe handling concerns and to submit an annual report to their governing boards or quality committees regarding their hospital's safe handling practices and activities.

Illinois has taken the lead in enacting legislation to both address the quality of health care and the working environment for nurses and other health care professionals.