

**Consideration of Proposed New Position Statement
15.30: Bullying and Violence in the Workplace**

Summary of Request

This report is an action item for the Board's consideration. Annually, Board Position Statements are reviewed and updated. It is also determined if additional position statements are needed based on national practice trends and issues. A current issue facing nursing practice is workplace violence and bullying. Therefore, a new Board Position Statement proposed by Board Staff defines both bullying and workplace violence highlighting relevant standards of nursing practice and violence prevention resources to promote safety.

Proposed New Position Statement

15.30 Bullying and Violence in the Workplace

Background for Proposed New Position Statement

Nationally, healthcare and social service workers are seeing a trend of increased risk of violence in the workplace. Included are workplace acts of bullying, which disrupt and negatively affect a collaborative working environment, team communication, and may lead to patient care errors. To address these trends, in 2016 the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (TCNWS) conducted a statewide study on workplace violence against nurses, as required by House Bill (HB) 2696, 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2015 which added Section 105.009 to the *Texas Health and Safety Code*. Based on the findings of the study, workplace violence remained a priority during the 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, passing HB 280 requiring the Board of Nursing, under Section 301.155, Occupations Code, to fund grant programs for reducing workplace violence against nurses. With the continued need for patient safety, it is professional behaviors that are in alignment with Board Rule 217.11- *Standards of Nursing Practice* that can assist nurses in reducing workplace violence to promote the health, safety, and wellness of patients.

Pros and Cons

Pros:

Adoption of the new Board Position Statement will provide guidance for nurses and the public related to bullying and violence in the workplace.

Cons:

None noted.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to adopt the new Board Position Statement 15.30: Bullying and Violence in the Workplace with allowance for non-substantive word editing for purposes of clarity as may be deemed necessary by Board staff.

15.30 Bullying and Violence in the Workplace

The mission of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board or BON) is to protect and promote the welfare of the people of Texas by ensuring that each person holding a license as a nurse in the State of Texas is competent to practice safely. Bullying and violence in the workplace can disrupt communication and teamwork, interfering with the nurse's ability to promote a safe patient care environment. It is important for nurses to maintain professionalism, through communication, conduct and caring behaviors. The Board believes that professional behaviors that are in alignment with [Board Rule 217.11- Standards of Nursing Practice](#) can assist nurses in eliminating workplace violence.

Bullying

Bullying within practice settings interrupts safe patient care. Bullying is a term used to describe disruptive, unprofessional behaviors that negatively affect the collaborative working environment, disrupt communication, and may lead to patient care errors. Examples of bullying behaviors cited by the American Nurses Association (2015) include but are not limited to:

- Hostile remarks;
- Verbal attacks;
- Threats, taunts or intimidation; or
- Withholding information or refusing to help a colleague.

Additionally, the American Nurses Associate notes that “evidence-based best practices must be implemented to prevent and mitigate incivility, bullying, and workplace violence; to promote the health, safety, and wellness of RNs; and to ensure optimal outcomes across the health care continuum”.¹

Violence in the Workplace

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence to include "any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site".² With healthcare and social service workers facing “a significant risk of job-related violence”³, in 2016, the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (TCNWS) conducted a statewide study on workplace violence against nurses. This study was performed in hospitals, freestanding emergency medical care facilities, nursing facilities, and home health agencies, as required by House Bill (HB) 2696, 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2015 which added Section 105.009 to the *Health and Safety Code*.⁴ The TCNWS Advisory Committee issued recommendations based on the study findings to:

- promote safer facilities

- encourage nursing staffing committees to consider incidents of workplace violence
- encourage reporting of violent events, and
- establish and maintain ongoing surveillance of workplace violence.

Based on these findings, workplace violence remained a priority during the 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, as HB 280 passed requiring the Board of Nursing, under Section 301.155, Occupations Code, to fund grant programs administered by the TCNWS for reducing workplace violence against nurses. HB 280 seeks to alleviate the trauma of workplace violence by providing grants to hospitals and other health facilities to implement innovative approaches unique to each facility and region to reduce the severity and frequency of these occurrences.

Collaborative Approach to Workplace Violence

Effective management of workplace violence begins by recognizing that workplace violence is a safety and health hazard. Nurses work with patients of differing backgrounds and in various practice settings at times when patients may experience “pain, devastating prognoses, unfamiliar surroundings, mind and mood altering medications and drugs, and disease progression” which can “cause agitation and violent behaviors.”³

The healthcare team must commit to work collaboratively in support of effective violence prevention programming. This commitment should include acknowledging the value of a safe and healthful, violence-free workplace and ensuring and exhibiting equal commitment to the safety and health of workers and patients/clients while maintaining a system of accountability for all involved members of the health care team.

Nurses may provide expertise and useful information, collaborating to design, implement and evaluate workplace violence prevention programming.³

Standards of Nursing Practice Related to Bullying and Workplace Violence

Consideration of and compliance with [Board Rule 217.11- Standards of Nursing Practice](#) is essential when responding to bullying or providing care to a patient that has the potential to become violent. It is the Board’s position that:

- Nurses must be aware of and comply with all laws and rules, including employer policies, regarding bullying and workplace violence [Board Rule 217.11(1)(A)].
- Nurses implement measures to promote a safe environment for patients and others [Board Rule 217.11(1)(B)]. This would include the creation and implementation of policies, procedures, and interventions to mitigate and/or eliminate bullying and workplace violence in the interests of a safe patient care environment.
- Nurses respect the client’s right to privacy by protecting confidential information unless required or allowed by law to disclose the information [Board Rule 217.11(1)(E)]. Though

acts of violence toward an individual can be a frightening and potentially dangerous situation, it is important to continue to respect the patient's privacy, and withhold patient identifiers when disclosing information about the incident, unless disclosure is required by law or to prevent harm⁵.

- Nurses obtain instruction and supervision as necessary when implementing nursing procedures or practices, make a reasonable effort to obtain orientation/training for competency when encountering new equipment and technology or unfamiliar care situations, and maintain responsibility for individual professional growth and continuing competency [Board Rule 217.11(1)(G), (1)(H) & (1)(R)]. It is important for nurses to be aware of applicable policies and procedures related to these workplace issues.
- Nurses notify the appropriate supervisor when leaving a nursing assignment [Board Rule 217.11(1)(I)]. If the nurse is unable to provide care to a patient any longer due to threats or actual violence, a nurse must communicate with the supervisor regarding the inability to safely provide care to this patient before leaving the assignment, as adequate nursing care coverage must be obtained prior to leaving the assignment.
- Nurses know, recognize, and maintain professional boundaries of the nurse-client relationship [Board Rule 217.11(1)(J)]. When confronting peer bullying in the workplace, it is important for the nurse to maintain professional boundaries and behaviors with patients and refrain from sharing information about the bullying experiences with patients. Fostering healthy communications with the health care team is best for patient care. The nurse has an obligation to establish, communicate and enforce professional boundaries, refraining from disparaging, violent, or unprofessional behavior in the presence of patients.
- Nurses institute appropriate nursing interventions that might be required to stabilize a client's condition and/or prevent complications, collaborating and consulting with the patient and members of the health care team in the interests of the patient's care in an effort to promote a safe environment for all [Board Rule 217.11(1)(M) & (1)(P)]. When a patient could or has become violent, it is important for the nurse to stabilize the patient to prevent further complications for the patient and the nurse. The nurse would need to collaborate with other health care providers to ensure the most appropriate care for the patient.
- Nurses must supervise the nursing care provided by others for whom the nurse is professionally responsible, ensuring the provision and maintenance of a safe patient care environment and make assignments to others that take into consideration client safety and that are commensurate with the educational preparation, experience, knowledge, and physical and emotional ability of the person to whom the assignments are made [Board Rule 217.11 (1)(U) & (1)(S)]. When making assignments that involve potentially violent patients, it is important to take into consideration the safety, knowledge, skills, and abilities of the nurse to whom the assignments are made.

- Nurses accept only those nursing assignments that take into consideration client safety and that are commensurate with the nurse's educational preparation, experience, knowledge, and physical and emotional ability; and provide, without discrimination, nursing services regardless of the age, disability, economic status, gender, national origin, race, religion, health problems, or sexual orientation of the client served [Board Rule 217.11 (1)(T) & (1)(L)]. Nurses must take into consideration any preconceived notions they may have about a patient that has the potential to, or has already become, violent. In instances of bullying, a nurse must determine if these experiences negatively influence their ability to collaborate with the team and care for patients before accepting an assignment.

Behaviors associated with bullying and workplace violence are unethical, unprofessional and compromise the safety of the patient and the health care team. Nurse leaders must assess their organizations for bullying and workplace violence and implement policies that support a framework to systematically reduce workplace violence.⁶ It is a shared responsibility among nurses and employers to create an environment in which both nurses and patients are trusted and feel safe.

¹American Nurses Association (2015). *Position Statement: Incivility, Bullying, and Workplace Violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy/State/Legislative-Agenda-Reports/State-WorkplaceViolence/Incivility-Bullying-and-Workplace-Violence.html>

²U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2017). *Workplace Violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>

³U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (2016). *Guidelines for preventing workplace violence for healthcare and social service workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3148.pdf>

⁴Texas Department of State Health Services Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies (2016). *Workplace Violence Against Nurses in Texas*. Retrieved from www.dshs.texas.gov/legislative/2016-Reports/DSHS-Report-HB2696.pdf

⁵Texas Board of Nursing. (2013). [When do nurses have a duty to report confidential health information](#). *Texas Board of Nursing Bulletin*, 44(2), 5-6.

⁶The American organization of Nurse Executives and the Emergency Nurses Association (2015). *Toolkit for Mitigating Violence in the Workplace*. Retrieved from http://www.aone.org/resources/final_toolkit.pdf

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