



## Resolution of nursing and midwifery practice concerns in the workplace

This position statement refers to nursing or midwifery practice concerns in any workplace situation that:

- are beyond the ability of the individual nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing\* to resolve;
- restrict the nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing's ability to deliver optimal care; and
- have caused or posed a potential risk of causing injury to staff, or the people for whom they provide care.

Examples of such concerns include:

- unrealistic performance expectations;
- poor physical layout of the work setting;
- staffing which is inadequate in number and inappropriate in skill level and mix;
- lack of supplies, services and other resources;
- unsafe practices of other health professionals;
- lack of written policies or standards to provide direction and support for nursing or midwifery practice; or
- conflict between health professionals about practice matters.

### **It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:**

1. It is the responsibility of employers and within their duty of care, to establish and operate mechanisms for the resolution of nursing and midwifery practice concerns.
2. All nursing and midwifery staff have a professional obligation (as set out by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia codes, standards and guidelines that govern the practice of nurses and midwives),<sup>1</sup> to raise any concerns regarding nursing and midwifery practice and to take appropriate action.\*\*
3. Registered nurses and midwives should be involved in the timely development and ongoing review of health organisation policies to assist the prevention and resolution of nursing and midwifery practice concerns.
4. Health organisation policies for the resolution of nursing and midwifery practice concerns should be available and communicated to all nursing and midwifery staff.
5. When a nursing or midwifery practice concern of an urgent nature arises, and an individual is in danger, the registered nurse or midwife should:
  - 5.1 initiate action immediately in an attempt to resolve the situation;
  - 5.2 contact their immediate supervisor and outline concerns;
  - 5.3 specify the legal requirements/standards which may not have been met;

\*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)

\*\*Standards may include: NMBA and ANMF standards for practice for nurses and midwives; codes of professional conduct and ethics for nurses and midwives; work health and safety legislation/standards; standards developed by professional organisations; organisational standards for patient/client/resident care; organisational policies and procedures; etc.



- 5.4 ask to be notified of action taken by management to remedy the situation, and prevent or minimise a recurrence; and
  - 5.5 ensure that documentation on the complaint and the resolution, is completed.
- 6 In situations where there is no immediate danger, the registered nurse or midwife should:
- 6.1 identify the legal requirements/standards<sup>1</sup> that were not met;
  - 6.2 communicate the concern in terms of the legal requirements/standards that cannot be or are not being met and their actual or potential effect on the people for whom they provide care, ensuring all relevant information is provided;
  - 6.3 fully document the concern and to whom it was referred for action and when;
  - 6.4 request feedback from the person to whom the concern was referred and any follow up action taken to resolve the issue and the eventual outcome; and
  - 6.5 pursue the matter as far as possible until a satisfactory resolution is achieved.
7. In situations where the registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife believes legal requirements/standards remain unmet and there is actual or potential effect on health outcomes, nurses and midwives should approach the external relevant state or territory organisations to assist resolution. These organisations may include but are not limited to the relevant Health Services Commissioner, accreditation body and/or Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife should contact their relevant state or territory Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation office to inform them of their concerns and to receive assistance in progressing this issue.

*Endorsed by Federal Council September 1994  
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Reviewed and re-endorsed November 2015  
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#### Reference

1. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Professional Codes and Guidelines, Professional standards: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>