

Frequently Asked Questions: The Work Situation Report

As a nurse, you may face problems that impact your practice. The Work Situation Report (WSR) is a process for addressing problems that cannot be resolved at the individual level and must be forwarded to the employer.

The New Brunswick Nurses Union (NBNU) encourages a collaborative approach to resolving professional practice problems. The goal is safe, competent and quality care for patients/clients/residents.

By reporting concerns and completing Work Situation Reports (available from your local president) every time there is a workload concern, a practice issue or an unsafe condition, the responsibility is shifted back to the employer.

The WSR is the first documented step to identify and demonstrate ongoing problems which will require a response by your manager, or people in authority. It also acts as evidence that you have identified an issue to patient safety or potential risk. It provides NBNU with the proper documentation should we need to argue that the layoffs have had an impact on patient care and safety.

The WSR is an important document that can help argue:

- Increased need for staffing level
- Practice setting improvements
- Safer workplaces
- Improved communication processes with the employer

- Enhanced nursing practice/quality of care
- The provision of necessary equipment and supplies

1. What is the Work Situation Report?

The Work Situation Report is a tool used to communicate to employers issues that arise on units that may put patients or registered nurses in compromised situations. Nurses can use the Work Situation Report to create a paper trail for situations that need to be addressed and resolved.

2. Why should I be using the Work Situation Report?

The Work Situation Report is meant to accelerate an internal problem solving process and make the employer aware of adverse working situations.

It is vital that you use this process as nurses and employers want the same thing: safe, quality patient care and services which is achieved when you meet your standards of practice.

In addition, the Work Situation Report is a written document of facts that can be used to argue your position on a situation.

3. When should I be completing a Work Situation Report?

When your working conditions compromise your ability to meet your Nursing Practice Standards and/or your ability to provide safe patient care.

4. What is a professional practice problem?

It is a problem that:

- Puts patients/clients/residents at risk;
- Interferes with the nurse's ability to practice in accordance with the *Standard of Practice for Registered Nurses, the Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses, Nurses' Act* or other legislation, workplace policies, procedures, the collective agreement or other relevant standards and guidelines; and
- Is beyond the ability of the individual nurse to resolve¹

5. What situations justify completing a Work Situation Report?

- a) When you feel you are not meeting your NANB Standards of Practice as they represent your professional and legal responsibilities;
- b) When patient care or patient safety is jeopardized.

6. Where do I get a Work Situation Report?

Contact your local president or someone from your local executive to find the Work Situation Reports if there are none on your unit.

7. How do I complete the Work Situation Report?

Here are some general tips for completing the Works Situation Report:

- a) Be specific and concise when describing the situation and the nature of the issue (i.e. conflict with the patient, another nurse);

¹ Nurses Association of New Brunswick. *Working together: a Framework for the Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurse.*2009

- b) Explain how the situation is affecting patient care (i.e. medications given too late; care rushed; teaching not provided, etc.);
- c) Name the actual person you talked to and quote his/her replies to you;
- d) Avoid abbreviations and report firsthand information;
- e) Cite the source of any second hand information;
- f) Never use patient names and ensure confidentiality if describing issues relating to patients;
- g) Make sure to indicate if this is an isolated issue/concern or ongoing;
- h) Please take time to make recommendations: work from the assumption your employer values the input of nurses for resolving workload/workplace issues;
- i) Identify if your workload issue is a nursing practice standards issue, a policy issue or a collective agreement issue;
- j) Print clearly and firmly as there are four copies and ensure the bottom copy is legible;
- k) If you need more space, use additional paper and attach them and make four copies;
- l) Sign and date the form;
- m) Make sure to give a copy to the nurse manager and your local president. It is vital that you notify the nurse manager or the supervisor on call of a workload/workplace issue so that the employer has an opportunity to correct the situation. It is not good enough to document that “ day nurses told them”;

8. What do I do once it is completed and signed?

Once the Work Situation Report is completed and signed, you must submit it to your nurse manager. Make sure you meet with him/her to discuss the situation and what he/she intends to do to resolve the situation. Make sure the nurse manager completes her section on the Work Situation Report.

9. What happens if the issue is not resolved with my nurse manager?

If the issue is not resolved with your nurse manager, then you must discuss this with your local president who will bring the Work Situation Report to the Professional Practice Committee meeting.

10. Can I file a Work Situation Report if there are insufficient LPNs or PSWs to do their work?

If this means that this requires you to do non nursing functions because there is no ward clerk, PSW or LPNs to support your unit and your work, complete a Work Situation Report.

11. Does that mean that if someone calls in sick and is not replaced or replaced with an LPN or PSW that I automatically fill out a form?

No. As a nurse you must assess the situation. The census of your unit may be down and the acuity of the patients you are dealing with may be less. However, if the census is up and the patient acuity is high, then yes, you should complete a work situation report.

12. Does the Work Situation Report replace the incident report in my workplace?

No, it does not

13. Can I complete the Work situation Report for another nurse?

Each nurse completes her own form. However, should there be a collective issue involving or affecting many nurses on a shift or unit, then one Work Situation Report can be completed and all nurses sign the report.

14. Is there a time limit to submit the Work Situation Report after a workplace issue has occurred?

The Work Situation Report should be completed within **24 hours** as the incident/situation is fresh in your mind and thus decreases the probability of forgetting details.

15. Who else can help me with Work Situation Report if my local president is not available?

If a member of your local executive is not available, you can contact NBNU's Education Officer to help you with the completion of the Work Situation Report or a labour relations officer if you have any questions or concerns in regards to the workplace issue itself.

16. Will using the Work Situation Report have an impact or change the situation?

Nurses are dedicated to providing a safe quality environment for their patients and advocating for them by using the Work Situation Report process is a big step in ensuring that happens.

The more we use the Work Situation Report to communicate unsafe workplace practices, the more impact we have to influence change. If you feel your work environment is preventing you from meeting your professional standards, engage in the Work Situation Report process with your employer.

17. Could I be reprimanded for completing a Work Situation Report?

No. It is your right under the collective agreement and your professional obligation.