

Advocacy Exemplars

It would be impossible to present examples of every advocacy situation a nurse may find themselves in. This section will present three different issues and demonstrate various ways a nurse might take steps to advocate for a particular position or outcome.

Advocacy checklist:

- Identify the concern
- Gather objective examples
- Know your organization's policies
- Identify the appropriate person or committee
- Communicating the patient-safety impact
- Offer or ask about solutions
- Document and follow up
- Escalate when appropriate

Concerns About Safe Staffing Within a Hospital

Scenario/Concern

You are a medical-surgical nurse experiencing recurring staffing challenges on your unit. Patient assignments may not consistently reflect patient acuity, breaks are frequently missed, and short staffing is becoming routine. You are concerned about the impact on patient safety, quality of care, and the nursing workforce.

Understand and Frame the Issue

- Document objective examples of staffing concerns, patient acuity, missed breaks, overtime, near misses, or other safety issues.
- Review your organization's staffing, escalation, incident-reporting, and shared-governance policies.
- Identify the appropriate pathway for raising concerns—such as your charge nurse, nurse manager, staffing committee, shared governance council, or professional practice council.
- Consider potential solutions, not just the problem.

State What You Want

- Choose an appropriate setting to communicate clearly and professionally. For example: "I'm concerned about a recurring staffing pattern that is affecting our ability to safely care for patients. I have documented several examples and would like to discuss how we can address the underlying staffing issue."
- Share specific examples and data
- Clarify concerns and questions about current staffing challenges:
 - What process is used to evaluate staffing against patient acuity?
 - How can nurses escalate the unsafe assignments?
 - Is this concern being tracked at the unit or organizational level?

- Provide any recommendations identified from observations, staff discussions, professional guidelines, etc.
- Ask what actions will be taken, who is responsible, and when the issue will be reassessed.

Follow Up

- Keep a record of your concerns, advocacy efforts, and responses
- Follow up with the appropriate leader or committee.
- If the concern remains unresolved or creates an immediate patient-safety risk, use the organization's established escalation process and appropriate external resources.

Concerns About Recent Workplace Violence Events

Scenario/Concern

You are a medical-surgical nurse who has experienced or witnesses verbal threats, aggressive behavior, intimidation, or physical violence from patients, visitors, or others. You are concerned about the impact on staff safety, well-being, and patient care. Advocating for a safe work environment is an important part of promoting quality care and supporting the nursing workforce.

Understand and Frame the Issue

- Document incidents, near misses, or recurring safety concerns.
- Report events through established organizational processes.
- Review workplace violence prevention policies, reporting procedures, and support resources.
- Identify the appropriate forum for discussion, such as your nurse manager, safety committee, shared governance council, or workplace violence committee.
- Consider potential solutions as well as the concerns.

State What You Want

- Choose an appropriate setting and communicate professionally. For example: "I'm concerned about several recent incidents of aggressive behavior on our unit and would like to discuss opportunities to improve staff safety and workplace violence prevention efforts."
- Share objective examples and observations.
- Ask questions such as:
 - What training and resources are available for staff?
 - How can frontline nurses participate in prevention efforts?
 - Offer practical recommendations based on staff experience or best practices.
 - Ask what actions will be taken and when progress will be reviewed.

Follow Up

- Keep a record of concerns raised and responses received.
- Continue reporting incidents and near misses.
- Participate in safety and shared governance initiatives when possible.
- Follow up on action items and timelines.