

*A professional nursing organization that develops nurse leaders, advances professional practice, influences health policy and promotes quality and patient safety.*

### **Talking Points**

#### **Board of Registered Nursing Oversight of Complaints**

- As registered nurses and leaders of our profession, ACNL members are strong advocates of safe patient care.
- Thousands of RNs provide exceptional quality nursing care in our communities each day. The vast majority of RNs in the state are devoted and competent professionals, dedicated to providing high quality care to their patients.
- There are more than 350,000 RNs in California. The RNs under disciplinary investigation by the BRN represent a very small percentage of RNs in California. According to the Los Angeles Times article, there were 2059 RNs disciplined by the BRN over the past 7 years. This represents less than 1 percent of the total number of RNs in California
- The Board of Registered Nursing must have the authority, responsibility and accountability to ensure public safety in healthcare settings. This includes adequate resources to thoroughly investigate complaints in a timely manner, in order to enforce regulations regarding the professional practice of nursing and discipline those in violation of these standards.
- The California Board of Registered Nursing exists to protect the public by regulating the practice of California's 350,000 registered nurses. The BRN utilizes the investigative staff at the state Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), sharing the DCA's 40 investigators with other California boards and bureaus. By comparison, the California Medical Board is a separate entity with 76 investigative staff for their 125,000 licensed physicians. Without question, the BRN needs additional investigative personnel either by directly employing these sworn officers, as in the Medical Board model, or increasing the Dept of Consumer Affairs investigative pool available to the BRN. Regardless of how the investigative staff is increased, priority must be placed on the timely investigation of complaints against registered nurses.
- As registered nurses and leaders of our profession, ACNL strongly supports the discipline, and when warranted, license revocation of those nurses who are proven to be incompetent, negligent or guilty of criminal or abusive acts that result in harm to patients. These complaints must be investigated in a thorough, yet expedient manner.
- In these difficult economic times, ensuring adequate resources for the BRN may necessitate a reasonable increase in nursing licensure fees.

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- The BRN has required fingerprinting of RNs since 1990. Effective March of this year, all RNs licensed prior to 1990 are required to be fingerprinted as part of their next license renewal. ACNL proactively partnered with a company providing fingerprinting services statewide and encouraged nurse leaders to have staff fingerprinted as soon as possible, rather than wait for their license renewal. Through this partnership, many health care organizations have provided fingerprinting services on-site. In addition, as part of our re-licensure paperwork, the BRN asks RNs to attest as to whether or not they have been convicted of a felony.
- At the facility level, most hospitals require criminal background checks of health care workers prior to employment. Many also require criminal background checks of nursing students. Health care organizations also have a formal complaint process that can be utilized by patients, families and other staff members to report misconduct, negligence or inappropriate behavior. When resulting investigation uncovers misconduct, employees are disciplined and, depending on the circumstances, may be terminated. When warranted, a report is made to the Board of Registered Nursing or other appropriate agency. ACNL has and will continue to encourage the reporting of practice violations to the Board of Registered Nursing.
- ACNL is committed to working with the BRN to develop and improve systems to address complaints of misconduct by nurses. California nurses set a very high standard for professional nursing practice in our state. To support our high standard of practice, we must ensure that patient complaints are addressed in a timely manner and properly investigated.
- Healthcare organizations have a formal complaint process. Therefore, nurse leaders across California strongly encourage patients and their families to report concerns about their nurse or any member of the health care team to the area supervisor, manager or other health care officials.

For more than 30 years, the Association of California Nurse Leaders (ACNL) has been living its vision of *positioning nurse leaders to influence the future of health care*. ACNL is a powerful voice for nurse leaders throughout California and serves as a statewide and national example of **affecting positive changes for nursing** and health care by developing nurse leaders, advancing the professional practice of nursing and improving the health of California communities.

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