

Background

The American Nurses Association has developed nursing sensitive indicators that capture outcomes most affected by nursing care. ANA is promoting, through its Nationwide State Legislative Agenda, state legislation that would require health care facilities to collect nursing sensitive indicator data and make it publicly available. The appropriate numbers and mix of nursing personnel (RN's LPN's and Unlicensed Staff) are imperative for the delivery of safe, cost-effective quality care. Nurses are pushing for research projects that will collect data to establish the relationship between the right mix of staff and positive patient outcomes. Preliminary studies comparing staffing information and information on patient outcomes show that when there are more registered nurses, patients experience fewer complications, shorter lengths of stay, decreased mortality rates and even lower overall costs. However, a critical need remains for more definitive data to show the clear linkages between nursing interventions, staffing levels, and positive patient outcomes. On the federal side, ANA is supporting SB 991, the Registered Nurse Safe Staffing Act of 2003 that calls for staffing plans evaluations based on nursing quality indicators.

In 2003, three states introduced nurse quality indicators legislation but none passed. A proposed **MA** bill would require all health care institutions to report annually on data collected such as: measures of severity, length of stay, ratios including skill mix, medication errors, pain management, readmission rates, nurse education and length of employment and other parameters, to enable the public to make comparisons. **NJ** legislation would require hospitals and nursing homes to compile staffing and patient care incidents such as medication errors, patient injuries, decubitus ulcers and nosocomial infections, posting such information daily in the patient care areas of each unit, providing monthly reports to the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services and making it available to the public on an annual basis. **NY** legislation would require facilities to disclose nursing quality indicators and directs the Commissioner of Health to adopt rules on the information to be disclosed.

Last year in 2002, legislation was passed in **CT** establishing a quality of care program within the Department of Public Health. The department is now required to develop standardized data sets to measure the clinical performance of health care facilities. New **TX** regulations require hospitals to develop nurse staffing systems and to measure patient outcomes through the collection of nursing quality indicators.

A study bill was enacted in **FL** in 1996. In 2000, legislation enacted in **RI** required an advisory council to consider nursing sensitive performance measures. Regulations were to be written in **NJ** regarding the mandatory collection and public disclosure of nursing quality indicators by health care facilities.