

RCW 70.41.410 Hospital staffing committee—Definitions.

(Effective until June 30, 2027.) The definitions in this section apply throughout this section, RCW 70.41.420, and 70.41.425 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Hospital" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 70.41.020, and also includes state hospitals as defined in RCW 72.23.010.

(2) "Hospital staffing committee" means the committee established by a hospital under RCW 70.41.420.

(3) "Intensity" means the level of patient need for nursing care, as determined by the nursing assessment.

(4) "Nursing assistant-certified" means an individual certified under chapter 18.88A RCW who provides direct care to patients.

(5) "Nursing staff" means registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants-certified, and unlicensed assistive nursing personnel providing direct patient care.

(6) "Patient care staff" means a person who is providing direct care or supportive services to patients but who is not:

(a) Nursing staff as defined in this section;

(b) A physician licensed under chapter 18.71 or 18.57 RCW;

(c) A physician's assistant licensed under chapter 18.71A RCW; or

(d) An advanced registered nurse practitioner licensed under *RCW 18.79.250, unless working as a direct care registered nurse.

(7) "Patient care unit" means any unit or area of the hospital that provides patient care by registered nurses.

(8) "Reasonable efforts" means that the employer exhausts and documents all of the following but is unable to obtain staffing coverage:

(a) Seeks individuals to consent to work additional time from all available qualified staff who are working;

(b) Contacts qualified employees who have made themselves available to work additional time;

(c) Seeks the use of per diem staff; and

(d) When practical, seeks personnel from a contracted temporary agency when such staffing is permitted by law or an applicable collective bargaining agreement, and when the employer regularly uses a contracted temporary agency.

(9) "Registered nurse" means an individual licensed as a nurse under chapter 18.79 RCW who provides direct care to patients.

(10) "Skill mix" means the experience of, and number and relative percentages of, nursing and patient care staff.

(11) "Unforeseeable emergent circumstance" means:

(a) Any unforeseen declared national, state, or municipal emergency;

(b) When a hospital disaster plan is activated;

(c) Any unforeseen disaster or other catastrophic event that substantially affects or increases the need for health care services; or

(d) When a hospital is diverting patients to another hospital or hospitals for treatment. [2023 c 114 s 2; 2008 c 47 s 2.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 18.79.250 was amended by 2024 c 239 s 13, changing "advanced registered nurse practitioner" to "advanced practice registered nurse," effective June 30, 2027.

Effective date—2023 c 114: "Except for sections 1, 3, 15, and 16 of this act, this act takes effect July 1, 2024." [2023 c 114 s 17.]

Findings—Intent—2008 c 47: "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Research evidence demonstrates that registered nurses play a critical role in patient safety and quality of care. The ever-worsening shortage of nurses available to provide care in acute care hospitals has necessitated multiple strategies to generate more nurses and improve the recruitment and retention of nurses in hospitals; and

(b) Evidence-based nurse staffing that can help ensure quality and safe patient care while increasing nurse satisfaction in the work environment is key to solving an urgent public health issue in Washington state. Hospitals and nursing organizations recognize a mutual interest in patient safety initiatives that create a healthy environment for nurses and safe care for patients.

(2) In order to protect patients and to support greater retention of registered nurses, and to promote evidence-based nurse staffing, the legislature intends to establish a mechanism whereby direct care nurses and hospital management shall participate in a joint process regarding decisions about nurse staffing." [2008 c 47 s 1.]

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(d) When a hospital is diverting patients to another hospital or hospitals for treatment. [2025 c 58 s 5133; 2023 c 114 s 2; 2008 c 47 s 2.]

Effective date—2025 c 58 ss 5058-5170: See note following RCW 7.68.030.

Explanatory note—2025 c 58: See note following RCW 1.16.050.

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