



Position Statement

Part-time employment¹

ICN Position:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) and its member associations strongly denounce the proliferation or increasing use of part-time nursing posts motivated purely as a cost-containment measure and without regard to the effect on the quality of services provided and the professional development of staff. ICN and national nurses associations (NNAs) oppose short-sighted efforts to reduce the cost of employee benefits by replacing full-time nurses with part-time or casual nurses.

ICN firmly supports the application of the principles of equal pay (including benefits) for equal work to full-time and part-time workers alike^{2,3}. ICN defends nurses' rights to work part-time under equitable conditions while promoting that employers maintain a balance of full-time and part time nurses. ICN supports policies that facilitate access to full employment when desired.

ICN will continue to:

- Promote the quality of nurses' work life and practice environments that support quality professional practice.
- Defend the right of part-time workers to equitable conditions of work and professional development opportunities.
- Identify trends which impact negatively on the continuity and quality of nursing care.
- Urge national nurses associations (NNAs) to monitor the impact of part-time work on the continuity and quality of nursing care as well as patient outcomes.
- Emphasise the need for NNAs to evaluate the benefit of both full-time and part-time employment to the health service, as well as to their members.

ICN and NNAs need to provide advice and negotiate policy on the optimal use of part-time employment in the various health sector work settings.

Nursing staff need to be responsible and accountable for their shifts.

¹ Part-time work is defined by the ILO as regular wage employment with hours of work substantially shorter than normal in the establishment concerned. Temporary work refers to all forms of employment on non-permanent contracts, of whatever duration, except a probationary period. It should be noted that part-time workers therefore may be employed on a permanent or temporary basis. *Terms and conditions of employment of part-time and temporary workers in the public service*. Geneva, 1994, p.3.

² See ICN Position Statement *Socio-Economic Welfare of Nurses*.

³ ILO Convention 175 on Part-time Work (1994); ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (1981); ILO Recommendation 165 on Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981).

NNAs must actively negotiate, support or lobby for working conditions which clearly specify:

- The voluntary nature of an employee's decision to work part-time.
- Agreed procedures to take up full-time employment if and when desired.
- Pay, working conditions and access to benefits at least equivalent or pro-rata to those offered to full-time workers.
- Equal opportunities to career and professional development for part-time workers.
- The need for balance between part-time and full-time workers to ensure continuity and quality of nursing care.
- Security in employment.

Background

Employees as well as employers view part-time employment favourably in many situations. It is often seen by nurses as a welcome option when addressing professional and personal satisfaction.

At the same time, employers consider part-time employment as a means of introducing or maintaining flexibility in staffing levels and decreasing operational costs.

The introduction of part-time employment is not free of potentially adverse consequences. Part-time employment of nurses may jeopardise the working conditions of full-time staff as a whole if the mix of staff is not determined adequately. The bargaining power of full-time staff decreases as their numbers are reduced.

Part-time workers are often less protected by labour legislation and regulations in terms of salary, insurance coverage, benefits, job security, rotated shifts and access to pension funds, continuing education and promotion.

ICN is aware of the concern that part-time employment of nurses may impact negatively on the continuity and quality of nursing care provided. A correct balance between full-time and part-time staff on duty in a particular unit/service at a given time needs to be maintained. This issue must be considered when rosters are developed as well as when nurses are recruited and allocated within a health facility or service.

Provisions for part-time employment should not compromise or be at the disadvantage of those nurses who work in a full time capacity. There needs to be a harmony in the balance between accommodating both full and part time roles.

The objectives of the International Council of Nurses include assisting national nurses' associations to improve a) the standards of nursing and the competence of nurses, and b) the professional, social and economic position of nurses.

Adopted in 1995
Reviewed and revised in 2000 and 2007

Related ICN Positions:

- Socio-Economic Welfare of Nurses
- Occupational Health and Safety for Nurses
- Nurse Retention, Transfer and Migration

The International Council of Nurses is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.