



A Union of Professionals

AFT Healthcare Policy Statement

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF UNLICENSED ASSISTIVE PERSONNEL

Unlicensed Assistive Personnel are individuals who act as assistants to nurses and who, under the nurse's clinical direction, can perform tasks in accordance with the individual's job description, education and experience.

There is an appropriate role for unlicensed assistive personnel in the delivery of health care. That role includes performance of non-nursing duties; for example, environmental maintenance and clerical tasks as well as directly assisting patients in the performance of activities of daily living such as hygiene, feeding and ambulation.

However, the relentless pressure for cost savings has led some employers to attempt to expand the duties of unlicensed personnel beyond the limits of their qualifications, training and education. Unlicensed personnel should be employed to assist, not to replace, licensed personnel in the delivery of direct patient care.

Increasingly, licensed personnel are being pressured to inappropriately delegate complex nursing tasks to unlicensed assistive personnel; a practice which would threaten both patient care and the career and professional licenses of the personnel involved.

Standardized job titles, job descriptions and minimum education or training requirements should be developed at the state level for all assistive personnel. Until such standards are developed, staff nurses should be involved in the initial development of the assistive role in each facility.

The Registered Nurse retains ultimate responsibility for all tasks which he or she delegates, therefore the Registered Nurse must remain the single authority over delegation of nursing tasks and responsibilities to unlicensed personnel based on the nurse's evaluation of the training and competencies of the unlicensed person and the nature of the tasks to be performed.

- Adopted by the AFT Healthcare Program and Policy Council. October 1995.