10 GOOD REASONS TO HIRE/RETAIN ISNAP NURSES:

A Commentary

INDIANA STATE NURSES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR NURSES

In the current U.S. economy where employers can be so selective in their hiring, some ask the Indiana State Nurses Assistance Program for Nurses (ISNAP) why they should bother to retain or hire the nurse who is participating in ISNAP when they can hire another nurse without known risk?

ISNAP’s answer . . .

1. Substance abuse and dependency, as well as psychiatric disorders, are prevalent in our society and individuals working in the health care industry are not immune. Nurses with substance abuse and dependency have identified the lack of education and ignorance about substance abuse and dependency along with the negativity towards those with these disorders as hindering their being identified and entering treatment.

When employers have pro-active policies and procedures in place that acknowledge the existence of these disorders in the nursing work force, identification and referral is enhanced, leading to safer work conditions and improved employee morale.

2. The cost of turnover in nursing, when accounting for both direct and indirect costs, may cost employers anywhere from 60 – 100 percent of the former nurse’s salary, plus the salary of the new nurse. By retaining nurses participating in the Texas Program, Baylor University Medical Center Dallas, realized an over $4 million savings in turnover cost avoidance during a nine-year period.

3. As reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, when individuals receive treatment for substance abuse, significant savings are realized by employers, including greater productivity, decreased turnover, decreased medical care and sick leave costs, and fewer on-the-job injuries. These factors represent only a few of the variables involved in the total cost of drug abuse and addiction that is estimated at costing the U.S. over one-half trillion dollars annually!

4. When employers retain or hire an ISNAP nurse, they have a nurse with an identified risk who is closely monitored, including random drug testing and a work-site monitor. The nurse applicant who is less known, i.e., not in ISNAP, may seem more desirable but may actually prove to have more liabilities. Research has shown that nurses in alternative programs (vs. nurses under licensure discipline) not only return to practice sooner but also if relapse occurs, they are identified sooner – providing less risk of harm. The caveat for employers: Be Careful! Being more punitive and restrictive may cause you to go from the frying pan to the fire!

5. Though the Recovery Monitoring Agreement (RMA) imposes firm boundaries or restrictions on the ISNAP participants’ nursing practice, they need not dissuade employers from hiring nurses in ISNAP. When co-workers are informed of the restrictions and why they are needed, as required under the RMA, co-workers are less likely to enable participants towards relapse while at work.

6. The participation and monitoring requirements under ISNAP are extensive and serve to protect patients, the participating nurse, and co-workers. ISNAP participants are required to inform both their employer and their professional peers who have a legitimate need to know of their participation. Nurses in ISNAP must also document their support system, e.g., attendance at self-help meetings such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, or therapy.

7. Nurses participating in ISNAP are often very motivated to make the sacrifices necessary to improve their lifestyles through their recovery, thereby benefiting their patients and their employers as nurse managers of ISNAP nurses have attested to time and time again. Thus, ISNAP provides the
framework for nurses to live a healthier lifestyle and with employers’ assistance, the checks and balances that allow them to have greater accountability of their nursing practice.

8. Nurses in ISNAP are required to maintain and demonstrate safe nursing practice and are monitored for the duration of their participation (usually one to three years). Translation: Employers are likely to gain a long-term employee.

9. Nurses in ISNAP have high success rate given the chronicity of their diseases. At least 65 percent of ISNAP nurses who sign RMA’s successfully complete ISNAP’s rigorous requirements.

10. If health care employers often, directly or indirectly, care for or help in the rehabilitation of patients who may have a substance abuse or psychiatric disorder as well as other chronic diseases, why would they not allow similar care and re-entry to practice for their nurse employees, especially those who have demonstrated good practice and loyalty? Caveat: Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water!

Find out more about the Indiana State Nurses Assistance Program – both a voluntary, alternative program and an Indiana State Board of Nursing mandated program for RNs and LPNs of Indiana whose substance use disorders may have impaired their practice at www.InianaNurses.org. ISNAP is administered by the Indiana State Nurses Association under contract with the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency.

Nurses can contact ISNAP for consultation and possible referral or obtain information about continuing education for one’s facility at 800/638-6623.

References


6. §467.008 (c) (6), Texas Health and Safety Code.


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