WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §16b-3-20

§16B-3-20. Patient safety and transparency.

(a) As used in this section:

"Acuity-based patient classification system" means a set of criteria based on scientific data that acts as a measurement instrument which predicts registered nursing care requirements for individual patients based on severity of patient illness, need for specialized equipment and technology, intensity of nursing interventions required, and the complexity of clinical nursing judgment needed to design, implement, and evaluate the patient's nursing care plan consistent with professional standards of care. The acuity system criteria shall take into consideration the patient care services provided by registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and other health care personnel.

"Competency" means those observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes, as determined by the facility, that demonstrate a nurse's ability to safely perform expected nursing duties of a unit.

"Direct-care registered nurse" means a registered nurse, who is a member of the facility's staff, has no management role or responsibility, and accepts direct responsibility and accountability to carry out medical regimens, nursing or other bedside care for patients.

"Facility" means a hospital, licensed pursuant to the provisions of this article, a licensed private or state-owned and operated general acute-care hospital, an acute psychiatric hospital, or any acute-care unit within a state operated facility.

"Nursing care" means care which falls within the scope of practice, as provided §30-7-1 *et seq*. of this code.

"Orientation" means the process that the facility develops to provide initial training and information to clinical staff relative to job responsibilities and the organization's mission and goals.

"Unit" means those areas of the hospital organization not considered departments which provide specialized patient care.

"Unit Nurse Staffing Committee" means a committee made up of facility employees which includes a minimum of 51 percent of direct-care registered nurses who regularly provide direct nursing care to patients on the unit of the facility for which the nurse staffing plan is developed.

(b) The Legislature finds that to better improve the quality and efficiency of health care and to better facilitate planning for future states of emergency in West Virginia, a comprehensive system for nurses should be established to create staffing plans to ensure facilities are

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adequately staffed to handle the daily workload that may accompany a state of emergency. Further, the Legislature finds that nurses in West Virginia fall under the definition of "critical infrastructure," and by establishing a comprehensive staffing plan, West Virginia will be better equipped to deal with employment and staffing issues associated with higher acuity treatment in facilities. Additionally, the Legislature finds that based upon the nature of the acuity-based patient classification system it relies upon confidential patient information to generate a staffing plan model and therefore both the classification system and the staffing plan are considered confidential records as defined in §30-3C-3 of this code and are therefore not subject to discovery in any civil action or administrative proceeding.

(c) A facility shall:

(1) Develop, by July 1, 2024, an acuity-based patient classification system to be used to establish the staffing plan to be used for each unit;

(2) Direct each unit nurse staffing committee to annually review the facility's current acuity-based patient classification system and submit recommendations to the facility for changes based on current standards of practice; and

(3) Provide orientation, competency validation, education, and training programs in accordance with a nationally-recognized accrediting body recognized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services or in accordance with the Office of Health Facility Licensure and Certification. The orientation shall include providing for orientation of registered nursing staff to assigned clinical practice areas.

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