From the President:
How to file a complaint with the state board of nursing
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Office Location
Indiana Professional Licensing Agency
Indiana State Board of Nursing
Indiana Government Center South Building
402 West Washington Street, Room W072
Indianapolis, IN 46204

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E-mail: pla2@pla.IN.gov

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How to file a complaint with the state board of nursing

by Laurie Peters, MSN, RN

Nurses often face workplace situations in which they’ve witnessed a colleague consistently providing substandard patient care or had concerns about patient safety issues. One issue that arises is how to file a complaint with the state board of nursing.

Complaints made to Indiana State Board of Nursing (BON) generally concern substandard care and can be made by health care providers, patients and their family members, and health care organizations. The Indiana Nurse Practice Act compels licensed nurses to report deficiencies in care provided by other professionals. According to the Indiana Administrative Code 848 IAC 2-2-2 Responsibility as a Member of the Nursing Profession, subsection11, the nurse shall, “notify in writing the appropriate party which may include: (A) the office of the attorney general, consumer protection division; (B) his or her employer or contracting agency; or (C) the board of any unprofessional conduct which may jeopardize the patient/client safety.”

The Indiana BON accepts letters, faxes and e-mail complaints, which are then forwarded to the Attorney General's office for investigation. A complaint form is available on-line from the Office of Attorney General at www.indianaconsumer.com.

The Indiana Attorney General's office receives, investigates, and prosecutes all complaints against licensed health professionals. The filed complaint should include your name and contact information; the name of the nurse involved in the incident(s); the name of the party harmed; the date, time, shift, and place of the alleged disciplinary violation(s); an explanation of your relationship to the party harmed; and other details that you deem appropriate to the complaint. Per statute, no anonymous complaints will be investigated.

You do not need to provide evidence to compel investigation of a complaint. An investigator from the Attorney General's office is sent to the site to gather as much information as possible about the incident. The investigator obtains and reviews medical records, drug logs, personnel records, and incident reports, and takes depositions or call in prospective witnesses for questioning. Once the investigation is complete, it is reviewed by the analyst supervisor and Chief of medical licensing. The complaint is then sent to a board designee who either approves or disapproves the investigators recommendations.

During the course of the investigation, all information is confidential. If the recommendation by the board designee is not to file charges, then the case is closed and remains confidential. If the recommendation is to charge, the case is turned over to the litigation section of the Attorney General’s office. The case remains confidential until a formal administrative complaint is filed with the board. At that point, the case becomes public information.

There is no statute of limitation on complaint cases. If another incident occurs involving the same nurse, all old complaints are opened and reviewed to see if they rise to the level of a licensing violation. When the case is brought before the board, the entire board considers the matter and determines the initiation of disciplinary action against the nurse.

What types of incidents are reportable?

Reportable incidents include:
• using unsafe judgment
• failing to provide nursing care
• performing techniques or procedures for which the nurse is unprepared
• disregarding dignity, privacy, or right to confidentiality

continued on page 6
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• inappropriately accepting/delegating nursing care
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• conviction of a crime having a direct bearing on nursing practice
• failure to maintain acceptable standards of nursing practice due to professional incompetence, physical or mental disability, or abuse of drugs or alcohol which endangers the public
• abusing either verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually
• falsifying, omitting, or destroying documentation
• abandoning or knowingly neglecting patients/clients requiring nursing care
• diversion of drugs
• failure to report unprofessional conduct to the appropriate authority

Why should I report substandard nursing care?
Although you may be reluctant to report a colleague to the BON, as a nurse, you have a legal and ethical duty to report substandard care. As with most other states, Indiana’s nurse practice act mandates that nurses report unsafe and incompetent care. The ANA’s Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements clearly addresses the nurse’s primary duty to patients, as well as the duty to preserve integrity and safety in practice.

There can be significant repercussions to not reporting instances of substandard nursing care, especially when it involves actual or potential patient harm. In the course of an investigation, if it is discovered that another employee (such as a supervisor) could have stopped the action, there may be a disciplinary complaint filed against them. The nurse who fails to report deficient practice may also become involved in malpractice litigation.

Finally, it should be noted that as nurses, it is important to provide as much assistance as possible during the course of investigations into substandard nursing care. Active involvement, whether it involves initiating the complaint, working with the Attorney General’s office on the investigation, or testifying before the board, will help address issues of poor nursing practice and assist in maintaining safe, effective, high quality nursing care for the citizens of Indiana.
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Our nurses are such great teachers, the ones I have been assigned to work with are awesome.”

Nikki Christian, OMHS Nurse

Nurses have numerous employment options. Sorting through offers and incentives can be challenging, especially for graduates with no previous nursing experience.

But for Nikki Christian it was a straightforward decision; the seasoned surgical technician knew where she wanted to put down her career roots.

“There was no question about where I wanted to work when I finished nursing school,” said Christian, who worked at hospitals in the Owensboro region for six years, “falling in love” with nursing while observing nurses during her tenure in hospital operating rooms.

Christian, who came to work at OMHS as a nurse extern following her third semester of nursing school, worked seven months in the Coronary Care Unit. Today, she is a nurse graduate and is a full-time Intensive Care nurse. She considers nurses at OMHS a significant part of her education.

“Our nurses are such great teachers,” she said. “The ones I have been assigned to work with are awesome.”

The next steps for Christian include a bachelor of science in nursing and eventually becoming a nurse anesthetist. But she said she knows where she wants to be.

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**Board Meetings**

The Indiana State Board of Nursing meets on the third Thursday of every month. The meetings begin at 8:30 a.m. and continue until business has been completed. The public is invited to attend. It is not necessary to notify the Board if you wish to attend.

- **September 21, 2006**
- **October 19, 2006**
- **November 16, 2006**
- **December 14, 2006**

The 2006 meetings will be held in the Auditorium of the Conference Center, Indiana Government Center South Building, 302 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. If you have any questions about attending a meeting you may contact the Board at (317) 234-2043 or via e-mail at pla2@pla.in.gov

Meeting agendas will be available 6 days prior to the meeting at www.pla.in.gov Click on the “calendar & news” link.
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Attentiveness to every detail. Proficiency at patient care technology. And excellent critical thinking skills. These are among the key attributes exhibited by RNs working in the ICU and Emergency Department at St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital.

Hospital spokespersons say that both areas are environments that provide considerable professional challenge and a strong sense of fulfillment at performing crucial services for a wide range of patients, as well as providing support to patients’ family members.

Meeting the needs of patients with complex medical diagnosis the ICU at St. Vincent is a 32-bed unit (expanding to 40 beds). “We address intensive care needs through a framework of different specialty teams,” says Pam Claycomb, Director of ICU at St. Vincent. “We specialize in the care of Medical, Surgical, and Neuro-Neurosurgical patients.

The RN at St. Vincent ICU is challenged to deliver care for patients with wide array of different diagnosis. “The ICU is a high tech, state-of-the-art setting,” says Claycomb, “so the nurse on every ICU team here needs to learn technology—and like technology.” That ability to like technology is important, Claycomb points out, because the influx of new technology into the ICU is an ongoing process. “But, it’s also vital to be proactive as a communicator to the patient’s family and a patient care advocate,” she adds.

A big part of the challenge for nurses in the ICU is to assess patients expertly and be good problem solvers. That plays an equally important role in St. Vincent’s Emergency Department (ED), a Level 2 Trauma Center.

“When the patient comes in to the ED, he or she is basically a ‘package of unknowns’ that we have to decipher,” says Toni Herron, Director of Emergency Services. “We have to follow the clues and symptoms to figure out what the underlying problem is.”

The ED, comprising 39 private patient rooms, has specialty rooms for cardiac care, ENT, and hand injuries, as well as gynecological conditions. It’s an approved location for treating patients with chemical and HAZMAT contamination.

The nursing team at St. Vincent’s ED is proud that it offers its nurses self-scheduling and, in terms of work culture, the ability to combine technical excellence with an emphasis on compassion.

“We give ED nurses the opportunity to provide excellent care,” says Herron, “and also to share the sacred gift of their heart with the patients and the families they touch.”
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Disciplinary Actions

**Indefinite Suspension**—Indefinitely prohibited from practicing for a specified minimum period of time.

**Indefinite Probation**—License is placed on probation for a specified minimum period of time with terms and conditions.

**Renewal Denied**—The Nurse’s license will not be renewed therefore, she/he does not have a license to practice in Indiana.

**Summary Suspension**—Immediate threat to the public health and safety should they be allowed to continue to practice. Issued for a period of ninety (90) days but can be renewed with Board approval.

**Letter of Reprimand**—Letter issued by the Board to the Nurse indicating that what she/he did was wrong.

**Revoked**—An individual whose license has been revoked may not apply for a new license until seven (7) years after the date of revocation.

**Discipline for the previous quarter will be printed in each magazine addition in the future. Changes may occur before printing so the most accurate discipline information should be obtained on the license search feature of our website at www.pla.in.gov.**

### June 15, 2006 Meeting

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<td>$500.00 Fine &amp; CEU’s</td>
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Things to smile about...

More areas of specialization for fulfilling your ambitions, more shifts to choose from to balance work and your life, more opportunity to work in a community where you live, and more benefits to make your dedication worthwhile – these are some ways St. Margaret Mercy puts more into your future. Being part of faith-based care that makes a difference in people’s lives is something even more to smile about.

Good things are happening here!

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Positions in ICU/IMCU, ER, Med/Surg, Behavioral, Home Care, & OR/PACU Depts.

Clinical Nurse Specialist
Position at our Hammond Campus in our Intensive Care Unit.

CRNAs
Full & part-time positions.

For more information regarding nursing opportunities at St. Margaret Mercy, candidates may contact
Mary Jo Erickson, Nurse Recruiter.
E-mail: maryjo.erickson@ssfhs.org

For more information about St. Margaret Mercy and to apply online, please visit:
www.smmhc.com

A smoke-free facility. EOE M/F/D/V

Sisters of St. Francis Health Services
SAINT MARGARET MERCY
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Imagine being part of a healthcare organization that is passionate about the care it gives to its patients and its co-workers. It doesn't stop there, St. Louis is passionate about its lifestyle - hometown feel, big city appeal. We invite you to explore St. Louis, MO and welcome you to join St. John's Mercy Medical Center!

We believe in helping you thrive in your specialty nursing career through our Fellowship Programs. Whether you’re a new graduate or experienced nurse, the fellowships at St. John's Mercy offer exceptional career-building opportunities to help you become a highly competent and confident RN in the area of nursing that is of interest to you. At St. John's Mercy, you can build a rewarding career.

Fellowship programs range from three to nine months, in the following specialties:

- OR
- NICU
- L&D
- Critical Care
- Med/Surg
- Pediatrics
- Postpartum/Nursery

Along with a rewarding career comes a rewarding lifestyle. St. Louis is the home of the Cardinals, Rams and Blues, and includes top museums, restaurants and other cultural attractions, such as:

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- Ranked in the Top 100 “Best Cities for Families” – Child Magazine

To open the gateway to new, exciting possibilities and to apply your passion, visit us at stjohnsmc.org/jobs or call Ken Joyce at (314) 251-4722 today!
I believe...

in a health care organization that offers opportunities to evolve.

Community Hospital North, a part of the Community Health Network and located in Indianapolis, is undergoing an exciting expansion project. This evolutionary medical concept has been designed with the insight of our experienced employees to accelerate and improve healing. A sophisticated mix of technology, ergonomics, and the human touch will create an exceptional patient experience and deliver the highest quality of care.

Due to this expansion, we are seeking Indiana licensed Nurses for the following opportunities: ICU/PCU Residency, Behavioral Care, Case Management, and Community Hospital North/The Indiana Heart Hospital Float Option.

Please visit us online at eCommunity.com for more information on these and other opportunities.

It’s your life. It’s your career. It’s your community. EOE.
What is Nursing at a Higher Level?

It’s more than a career—it’s a call to caring.

It’s the challenge to be the best nurse you can be.

It’s working at St. Vincent Indianapolis and Carmel Hospitals.

For some RNs, nursing is more than a career; it’s a call to caring. If you’re one of these exceptional nurses—a customer-focused caregiver with great clinical skills, an open mind, and respect for both patients and your profession—St. Vincent Indianapolis and St. Vincent Carmel have exciting opportunities in nursing for you to explore.

We have leadership that really listens; an environment where you’re empowered to provide outstanding care; a workplace that encourages camaraderie and work/life balance, and the flexibility and financial incentives to deepen your knowledge of nursing through continuing education and broadening skill sets.

Call to caring? To learn more about our current opportunities, please visit us at stvincent.org. For questions, contact one of our Nurse Recruiters by calling 317-582-7384 or 317-338-2241. EOE.

*Be on the lookout for our career event advertisement in The Indianapolis Star.