

Guidance to Nurses and Midwives with regard to Strike Action

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An Bord Altranais

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An Bord Altranais, is the statutory body established by the Nurses Act, 1985, and is responsible for the regulation of nursing and midwifery in Ireland. The broad concern of An Bord Altranais is the promotion of high standards of education, training and professional conduct among nurses and midwives, and therefore registered and competent nurses and midwives will provide nursing and midwifery care thus ensuring protection of the public. It provides guidance to nurses and midwives in relation to their professional practice and behaviour through the publication of the *Code of Professional Conduct for each Nurse and Midwife* (An Bord Altranais, 2000), the *Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework* (An Bord Altranais, 2000) and other publications. Nursing practice is underpinned by values that guide the way in which nursing care is delivered.

An Bord Altranais considers that the following values should underpin nursing practice and provide for the formulation of a philosophy of nursing:

- The best interests of the patient/client and the importance of promoting and maintaining the highest standards of quality health services should be foremost.
- Nursing care should be delivered in a way that respects the uniqueness of each patient/client regardless of culture or religion.
- Fundamental to nursing practice is the therapeutic relationship between the nurse and the patient/client that is based on trust, understanding, compassion, support and serves to empower the patient/client to make life choices.
- Nursing practice involves advocacy for the individual patient/client and for his/her family. It also involves advocacy on behalf of nursing within the organisational and management structures within which it is delivered.
- Nursing practice is based on the best available evidence.
- Nursing practice should always be based on the principles of professional conduct as outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct for each Nurse and Midwife approved by the board of An Bord Altranais (An Bord Altranais 2000 p. 3- 4).[1]

[1] An Bord Altranais has formulated a philosophy of Midwifery practice underpinned by the same values.

The Scope of Practice Framework requires that all nurses and midwives maintain professional accountability and competency.

“Accountability is the cornerstone of professional nursing and midwifery practice. Nurses and midwives are accountable both legally and professionally for their practice. Nurses and midwives are accountable to the patient/client, the public, the regulatory body, their employer and any relevant supervisory authority. It should be noted that accountability applies to both actions and omissions”.

The Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework, April 2000.

Registered nurses and midwives have primary responsibility for the care that they provide to patients/clients and are individually accountable for their own practice. This means that nurses and midwives must be answerable for the decisions they make in the course of their professional practice. The question for each individual nurse and midwife of whether he or she should take strike/industrial action poses a professional ethical dilemma. Nurses and midwives have the freedom to make decisions in accordance with their scope of practice. Before pursuing legitimate and authorised strike/industrial action, nurses and midwives are reminded that such action demands that full cognisance must at all times be taken to maintain the integrity, safety and wellbeing of those within their care. Each nurse and midwife is obliged to question and consider the consequences of strike/industrial action in relation to his/her professional accountability and responsibility for patients/clients who may be at risk during strike/industrial action.

An Bord Altranais states:

... “The nursing profession demands a high standard of professional behaviour from its members and each registered nurse is accountable for his or her practice;

... Any circumstances which could place patients/clients in jeopardy or which militate against safe standards of practice, should be made known to appropriate persons or authorities”.

The Code of Professional Conduct for Each Nurse and Midwife, April 2000.

Total withdrawal of nursing and midwifery care of patients/clients is inconsistent with the philosophy reflected in the *Code of Professional Conduct for each Nurse and Midwife* (April 2000) and the *Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework* (April 2000).

References:

An Bord Altranais (2000) *The Code of Professional Conduct for each Nurse and Midwife*. Dublin: An Bord Altranais.

An Bord Altranais (2000) *Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework*. Dublin: An Bord Altranais.