Ask a Practice Advisor

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At times I am asked to float to another unit. What is my responsibility to the unit I have been floated to? What is my professional responsibility to my home unit if the situation changes there and I need to return?

Looking at this situation there are several considerations.

Patient Safety. The most important consideration in any decision regarding assignment of RNs is safety of the patient. It is important that patients on both units are cared for by the care provider who has the knowledge, skill and judgment to best meet the care needs of the client. This may mean considering the RN who is floating as a temporary solution to the staffing need and having alternate RN options if the situation on either unit changes.

Professional Standards. As a professional RN you must feel confident to provide the care that is required on the unit you are floating to. Orientation to the unit should include layout of the unit, routines, what is expected of you when you float to the unit and any other information you require to provide safe patient care in that setting. This falls in line with our standards and foundation Competency #3:

The RN recognizes the registered nurse scope of practice and individual competence limitations within the practice setting and seeks guidance as necessary.

If you have not received sufficient orientation to the unit, it is your professional responsibility to speak with your manager/supervisor to discuss ways you can gain the competence to meet this employer need.

Policy. Employer policy should support you in this practice situation. Policy should address the process for floating staff from one unit to another ensuring sufficient resources in both practice areas.

Resources

Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses, 2013

Interpretation of the RN Scope of Practice, 2015

RN Scope of Practice - Role Clarity Took Kit available at www.srna.org