

Interprofessional Relationships

I manage a team of RNs, LPNs and RPNs who work together with OT, PT, physicians, dietary and many other health care providers. There has been tension between the RNs and a couple of physicians resulting in strained relationships. What are the responsibilities of RNs in resolving unhealthy professional relationships?

- RNs are expected to develop and maintain professional relationships with health care team members (1).
- RNs build trustworthy relationships as the foundation to meaningful communication (2).
- RNs treat each other and other health care team members in a respectful manner and work to resolve differences in a constructive way (3 and 4).
- Professional RN leadership is demonstrated by building relationships and trust (5).
- The SRNA always promotes resolution of professional practice issues at the lowest level.

Q&A

- **When working with people personalities, beliefs and values may collide.**
 - A. It is important to develop your individual skills in coaching and supporting your staff to resolve conflict.**
 - Proactively explore supports available through human resources.
 - Use self-reflection to identify areas in which you need to further develop your skills and incorporate that information into a learning plan.
 - B. Things you might consider doing which directly impact your staff include:**
 - Engage staff in discussions in which they provide ideas on what might be helpful in creating a positive practice environment.
 - Focus on development of soft skills for both yourself and your staff such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, team work, leadership skills, emotional empathy, time management, understanding generational differences, power relationships, etc.
 - Invite staff who may be interested in developing a learning module as part of their continuing competence program to approach you to develop a plan for sharing or presenting this information. As a RN manager, you may want to add this activity to your own continuing competence program learning plan.
- **If there is a conflict within the team, is it the responsibility of the RN to attempt to resolve it?**

Yes. As leaders within the health care team, RNs are expected to support collaborative teams and interpersonal relationships within those teams. RNs are leaders in every role and should use their knowledge to positively foster high performing teams. However, all team members should share the responsibility for conflict resolution.

- **If the team has been unsuccessful in resolving the conflict at the lowest level, what steps should I as the manager take?**

For conflict resolution to be successful, everyone needs to commit themselves to the process. If this is not happening, possibly you will need to speak to the individuals involved and outline your expectations for conflict resolution and respectful, productive teamwork. When situations such as these are not dealt with in an effective and timely manner, there can be a negative impact on patient care and workplace morale.

SRNA Resources

[Code of Ethics for registered nurses, 2008](#)

[Standards and Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses, 2013](#)

External Resources

[AIDET: Five Steps to Achieving Satisfaction](#)

[Interpersonal Skills](#)

Resource Key		
Number	Resource	Reference
1	Code of Ethics for registered nurses, 2008	G8, p. 19
2	Code of Ethics for registered nurses, 2008	A3, p. 8
3	Code of Ethics for registered nurses, 2008	D10, p. 14
4	Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2013)	Competency 8, p. 9 and 76.a, p. 16
5	Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2013)	Competency 25.a, p. 10