

RN Charge Responsibility

I manage a unit where an RN is assigned as the charge nurse. There are a couple of experienced RNs who have come to my office telling me that they don't want to be assigned the charge nurse role. Aren't RNs expected to take on this role?

- Key components of *The Registered Nurses Act* (1988) identify that RNs are responsible for the assignment and coordination of client nursing care (1).
- The RN is responsible for autonomously and collaboratively determining the appropriate assignment of client care.
- RNs coordinate nursing care in all health care settings (1).
- RNs demonstrate leadership in the coordination of health care by: (a) assigning client care; (b) delegating and monitoring the performance of delegated registered nursing activities by selected health care team members; and (c) evaluating skills mix (2).
- Nurses collaborate with other health-care providers and other interested parties to maximize health benefits to persons receiving care and those with health-care needs, recognizing and respecting the knowledge, skills and perspectives of all (3).

Q&A

How should I respond when these RNs tell me that they don't want to be assigned the charge nurse role?

- It might be helpful for you to explore the reasons why they are hesitant to accept the charge nurse role. Once you know the reasons, it will be easier to offer them the supports they need to transition into this role. You may also want to meet with these nurses to do several things:
 - Remind them that coordination of care is an integral part of the RN role,
 - Share your performance expectations with them and to explain how important it is to the team that they embrace the charge nurse role,
 - Reassure them that they have your support as they learn and grow in this role, and to
 - Collaboratively develop a plan that supports and enables them to begin developing the ability and confidence to act as the charge nurse.

I have heard from some of the staff that one of the RNs accepts the charge nurse role on evenings or weekends, but then lets one of the other more assertive staff members on the team make all of the client care decisions. What is the best approach to solve this issue?

- The first step is to give the RN an opportunity to share their side of this story. If they identify that this is occurring, it might be helpful for you to explore the reasons why this is happening. Once you know the reasons, it will be easier to resolve this situation. You may want to also discuss several things:
 - Coordination of care is an integral part of the RN role
 - As members of a self-regulating profession, RNs practice according to the values and responsibilities in the Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses and in keeping with the professional standards, laws and regulations supporting ethical practice (4).

RN is used to represent all SRNA members including RN(NP)s and RN(AAP)s.

- The registered nurse is accountable and accepts responsibility for own actions and decisions (5). If they are assigned as the charge nurse, then they must perform the duties and functions of a charge nurse.
- Share your performance expectations with them.

SRNA Resources

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

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

[What is a Registered Nurse?](#)

External Resources

[CNPS InfoLaw: Supervision](#)

Resource Key		
Number	Resource	Reference
1	What is a Registered Nurse?	p.2
2	Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2013)	Competency 75, p. 16
3	Code of Ethics (2008)	p. 10, #3
4	Code of Ethics (2008)	p.18, #1
5	Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2013)	Competency 1, p. 9