Incivility, Bullying, and Workplace Violence Prevention: Key recommendations for nurses and employers to promote a culture of safety and respect

ANA’s Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements states that nurses are required to “create an ethical environment and culture of civility and kindness, treating colleagues, co-workers, employees, students, and others with dignity and respect.” Similarly, nurses must be afforded the same level of respect and dignity as others (ANA, 2015a). Thus, the nursing profession will no longer tolerate violence of any kind from any source. All registered nurses and employers in all settings, including practice, academia, and research must collaborate to create a culture of respect, free of incivility, bullying, and workplace violence. Best practice strategies based on evidence must be implemented to prevent and mitigate incivility, bullying, and workplace violence; to promote the health, safety, and wellness of registered nurses; and to ensure optimal outcomes across the health care continuum. This position statement, although written specifically for registered nurses and employers, is also relevant to other health care professionals and stakeholders who collaborate to create and sustain a safe and healthy interprofessional work environment. Stakeholders who have a relationship with the worksite have a responsibility to address incivility, bullying, and workplace violence.

Workplace incivility, bullying, and violence can result in:

- Nurses leaving the profession
- Low job satisfaction
- Health effects: physical, psychological
- Impaired nursing judgment
- Decreased appeal to potential new nurses
- Lower nursing faculty numbers
- Decreased self-worth and confidence
- Unhealthy, disrespectful work environments
- Decreased productivity
- Treatment for victims of violence
- Legal expenses
- Recruiting, hiring and training new employees
- Employee turnover

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation’s 3.6 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

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Developed by the Incivility, Bullying, and Workplace Violence Professional Issues Panel

The following is not a complete list of all the recommendations made by the professional issues panel. Please see ANA’s Position Statement Incivility, Bullying, and Workplace Violence for all recommendations as well as a thorough background on the issue, references, and resources.

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**Recommendations for Nurses:**

**Incivility and Bullying Prevention:**

- Never abuse power.
- Establish positive work norms including collaboration, sharing, and encouragement.
- Be polite—say thank you, acknowledge kindness, apologize when appropriate, and make amends if needed.
- Gain and practice conflict negotiation/resolution skills.
- Evaluate yourself, carefully considering your words and actions.
- Build and maintain healthy, respectful relationships using excellent, open communication and inclusiveness.
- Uphold ANA’s Incivility and Bullying Prevention Recommendations for Nurses:
  - Following a bullying incident, consider obtaining peer support, EAP assistance, counseling, and/or legal counsel. Worker’s Comp may also be necessary.
  - Bystanders that witness a bullying incident should support the target, consider addressing the instigator, and act as an advocate for the target.
  - When bullied, consider responding directly to instigator, if appropriate; code words can be used by a target of the bully. When bullied, activate the security system, seek guidance through your facility-specific protocols, and then through frequent updates.
  - Use administrative controls suitable with existing with a bully bullying with a bully.
  - Ensure sufficient numbers and quality of police, security, and administrative personnel.
  - Use predetermined phrases in anticipation of a bullying event.
  - Practice self-care.
  - Anticipate, prevent, and respond to crises.
  - Practice lifelong learning.

**Workplace Violence:**

- Be exposed to violence through the implementation of comprehensive power programs.
- Understand workplace violence prevention policies and procedures.
- Be fully trained on leadership, management, and implementation of job site violence training.
- Developing a violence prevention plan, collaborating with the appropriate channels, and report the event immediately, keeping a detailed written account.
- Educate and train employees on workplace violence prevention guidelines and site-specific policies.
- Develop a comprehensive WPV prevention program aligning with OSHA’s Workplace Violence Guidelines for Preventing WPV for Healthcare and Social Service Workers.
- Ensure leadership commitment to a supportive work environment for the target.
- Ensure all staff are fully trained on identifying situations where violence is likely.
- Develop a comprehensive WPV prevention program through ongoing education, including crisis intervention and management.
- Provide optimal staffing in all areas particularly nursing and security.
- Minimize provoking former employees.
- Prevent the spread of violence from healthcare workers to the community.
- Refer bystanders to appropriate services.
- Attend counseling post-incident.
- Hold post-incident meetings to evaluate and improve the situation going forward and to provide support and express sympathy to victims and bystanders.

**Recommendations for Employers:**

**Incivility and Bullying:**

- Trust blindly.
- Consider creating a safety or evidence-based practice committee with designated leadership, including evaluation of instigators.
- Ensure all staff are fully trained on identifying situations where violence is likely.
- Develop a comprehensive WPV prevention program aligning with OSHA’s Workplace Violence Guidelines for Preventing WPV for Healthcare and Social Service Workers.
- Ensure leadership commitment to a supportive work environment for the target.
- Ensure all staff are fully trained on identifying situations where violence is likely.
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**Workplace Violence:**

- Standardized training and education geared to all employees, not just those who work in violence prevention.
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- Ensure all staff are fully trained on identifying situations where violence is likely.
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- Provide optimal staffing in all areas particularly nursing and security.
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- Designated personnel trained in client relationships, violence and as needed, including mock drills, de-escalation techniques, self-defense, situational awareness.
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- Refer bystanders to appropriate services.
- Attend counseling post-incident.
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- Using administrative controls suitable with existing with a bully bullying with a bully.
- Ensure sufficient numbers and quality of police, security, and administrative personnel.
- Use predetermined phrases in anticipation of a bullying event.
- Practice self-care.
- Anticipate, prevent, and respond to crises.
- Practice lifelong learning.

**Codes and Policies:**

- Codes
- Policies, procedures
- Anticipate, prevent, and respond to crises.
- Practice lifelong learning.