



Canadian Nursing Students' Association
Association des étudiant(e)s infirmier(ère)s du Canada

Position Statement

Accommodation within Clinical Placements for Students with Temporary, Transient, or Sporadic Disability or Injury

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Introduction and Background

In Canada, students of schools of nursing are required to complete institution designated number of clinical hours to satisfy course requirements for graduation as directed through the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN). Injury or temporary, transient, or sporadic disabilities can hinder students in completing the designated clinical hours, resulting in delayed or denial of timely completion of course requirements. Within the Manitoba Human Rights Commission (1998), "A disability becomes a handicap when it interferes with the activity to be done, but it is often possible to remove the handicap by making adjustments in the work or living environment". Policies for accommodation for workers with disabilities, whether temporary, sporadic, or permanent are part of all provincial human rights codes and the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA). Additionally, policies and guidelines for accommodations exist within institutions such as the Canadian Labour Congress and various provincial nursing labour organizations. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission Guideline on Accessible Education (2009), education is considered a service whereby "education providers have a duty to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities to allow them access to educational services equally, unless to do so would cause undue hardship" (p. 5). Focus on the definition of disability should be the effects of preference, exclusion, or differential treatment due to physical limitation, an ailment, or otherwise perceived limitation (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009).

Legislation such as provincial and territorial human rights codes and acts prohibit actions that discriminate against those with disabilities. Each policies' aim is to recognize the dignity and worth of every person and to provide equal opportunities without discrimination. Denial of ability to complete course requirements due to disability, whether temporary or permanent is in violation of the CHRA. All individuals have an equal opportunity to make for themselves the lives they wish to have and their needs accommodated without being hindered by discriminatory practices such as those based on disability (Canadian Human Rights Act, 2014). While various policies and legislation are in place regarding equal access within educational institutions, normative assumptions of what constitutes a capable nurse can influence decisions regarding what individuals are able to participate within clinical nursing placements (Ryan, 2011).



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Canadian Nursing Students' Association Position

The Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) supports the development and implementation of a process of accommodation within Canadian schools of nursing for clinical placements due to permanent, temporary, transient, or sporadic disability, whether it be physical, mental, or otherwise. Further, the Canadian Nursing Students' Association encourages a greater emphasis on the inclusion of education within Canadian schools of nursing surrounding the topics of accessibility, disability, and accommodation within the profession of nursing.

Relation to Canadian Nursing Schools' Curriculum

CNSA is governed by three objectives and goals. These include: being the primary resource for nursing students, influencing and advancing nursing curriculum and research, and strengthening and creating stakeholder relations (Canadian Nursing Students' Association, 2011). The topic of accommodation due to injury or disability is relevant within schools of nursing because nursing students need to be aware of what accessibility, disability, and accommodation involve. Terms which are used within nursing education in relation to patient populations but rarely in relation to nurses or nursing students. This knowledge gap leads to a lack of information thus, loss of potential advocacy in the case of nursing student injury or disability. Disability or physical frailty are overt structures within the application process which can discourage individuals from applying to nursing education. While covert structures, such as unequal access to clinical components within the curriculum due to disability, may lead to difficulty or failure to complete the program and may be less likely to succeed in their attempt to become a nurse (Ryan, 2011).

Faculty may require education on what constitutes a disability and how to best support students with a disability. Education of nurse faculty and students on identification of varied accommodations such as use of assistive devices can help students with disabilities be more successful in the program. This would involve the realization that there are multiple different methods of properly accomplishing a task while still maintaining the required principles or standards, and the requirement of various types of classroom learning (Ashcroft et al, 2008). In order to shift the perspective of equal access within the clinical component of nursing education, steps must be taken to encourage nurse educators to further investigate and implement new legislation outlining a policy for accommodation in clinical practice. The benefits of including access to information about accommodation and disability within the curriculum will aid in addressing the perceptual biases which may be held by both faculty and students regarding those individuals with disabilities (Ashcroft et al, 2008).

Conclusion

Every nursing student must complete an institution designated number of clinical hours to satisfy course requirements for graduation. The denial to participate within clinical placements will directly hinder a student's ability to complete their education and thus enter the profession. The creation of a clinical accommodation process and inclusion of education surrounding accessibility will ensure that the primary governing objections of CNSA are being met. This will also allow for students to advocate for inclusion of such processes within each individual school of nursing. This will aid in the creation of an inclusive environment which provides a discrimination free curriculum where every individual is capable of continuing their education with equitable access to all opportunities within the nursing profession.



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