

RN Charge Nurse 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 provide and support leadership in nursing for optimal coordination and provision of care. (2)
- RNs collaborate with other health-care providers and other interested parties to maximize health benefits to persons receiving care and with health-care needs and concerns, recognizing and respecting the knowledge, skills and perspectives of all. (3)
- RNs consult with clients and healthcare team members to make ongoing adjustments required by changes in the availability of services or client health status. (4)

How should I respond when these RNs tell me 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,
 - Collaboratively develop a plan that supports and enables them to begin developing the ability and confidence to act as the charge nurse.
- The SRNA practice team offers support for those who wish to better understand the RN role and the expectations of practice. The team can be reached at practiceadvice@srna.org.

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 ethical responsibilities in the *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* and in *Registered Nurse Practice Standards*. (2 & 5)
- The RN is accountable and accepts responsibility for their own actions and decisions. (6)
 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, 2017](#)
- [Registered Nurse Practice Standards, 2019](#)
- [Registered Nurse Entry-level Competencies, 2019](#)
- [Interpretation of the RN Scope of Practice, 2015](#)
- [What is a Registered Nurse?](#)

External Resources

- [CNPS InfoLaw: Supervision](#)

Resource Key		
Number	Resource	Reference
1	Interpretation of the RN Scope of Practice(2015)	page 1
2	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 40, page 6
3	Code of Ethics (2017)	B4, page 10
4	Registered Nurse Entry Level-Competencies (2019)	Competency 5.1, page 9
5	Code of Ethics (2017)	A1, page 8
6	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 1, page3

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