

WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION

RESOLUTION #2

PREVENTING PREVENTABLE NEEDLESTICK AND SHARPS INJURIES

WHEREAS, Health care workers (HCWs) suffer between 600,000 and one million injuries from conventional needles and sharps annually. These exposures can lead to hepatitis B, hepatitis C and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS.

WHEREAS, At least 1,000 HCWs are estimated to contract serious infections annually from needlestick and sharps injuries

WHEREAS, Registered nurses working at the bedside sustain an overwhelming majority of these exposures.

WHEREAS, Needlestick injuries are preventable. Over 80% of needlestick injuries could be prevented with the use of safer needle devices and appropriate placement of sharps containers and use of Personal Protective Equipment, and

WHEREAS, In spite of recent passage of protective laws, needlestick and sharps injuries are still occurring and many employers and health care settings have not yet implemented needlestick and sharps prevention precautions.

BE IT THEREFORE

RESOLVED, That WSNA send a letter to all Washington State hospitals' Health and Safety Committees urging them to establish the following goals for their hospital:

1. Prevent the occurrence of all needlestick and sharps injuries - getting to ZERO!
2. Ensure adequate and appropriate supplies of safer needle devices, sharps containers and Personal Protective Equipment
3. Involve direct care nurses in product decision making that implements the language in the 2000 Needlestick safety and prevention act
4. Ensure training of all health workers about how and why to prevent exposures and how to participate in decision-making and address barriers to prevention, and be it further

RESOLVED That WSNA urge the Washington Department of Labor and Industries through its Safety & Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program to identify reporting rates and barriers to reporting of injuries by anonymous surveys and develop plan for addressing barriers, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA educate nursing students, nurses and employers about the health impact of needlestick and sharps injuries taking into account the mental strain and physical side effects from post-exposure follow-up and prophylaxis with anti-retrovirals, and be it further

RESOLVED That the WSNA Cabinet on Economic & General Welfare be requested to urge the Local Units to negotiate paid administrative leave that is not charged against accrued sick leave or paid time off (PTO) when a nurse sustains a work-related needlestick and/or sharps injury, and be it further

RESOLVED That WSNA initiate legislation for presumptive compensability for nurses (similar to language in the state of Nevada. For example, when a nurse is infected with a bloodborne pathogen, it is assumed that the infection resulted from a workplace exposure and compensation will be provided under worker's compensation).

Submitted on behalf of the WSNA Occupational & Environmental Health and Safety Committee

Approved by WSNA Board of Directors, March 5, 2007

Adopted by the WSNA General Assembly, May 3, 2007

Cost Impact Statement

Justification:

In spite of recent passage of protective laws, needlestick and sharps injuries are still occurring and many employers and health care settings have not yet fully implemented important needlestick and sharps prevention precautions. As a result, nurses and others continue to experience preventable workplace needlestick injuries that are unnecessarily and endanger their lives.

Proposed Implementation Activities

1. Meet with the Washington State Hospital Association leadership to educate their constituencies about the dangers of preventable needlestick and sharps injuries and their responsibilities as employers.
2. Educate and inform nurses and other nursing organizations about measures to prevent needlestick and sharps injuries in the workplace.
4. Publish articles in the *Washington Nurse* and on the WSNA website about nurses and employers roles in preventing preventable needlestick and sharps injuries
5. Work with other unions and nursing organizations to advocate for legislative and regulatory remedies to ensure that nurses and other healthcare workers are protected from needlestick and sharps injuries in the workplace.
5. Staff to develop contract language for paid administrative leave that is not charged against accrued sick leave or paid time off (PTO) when a nurse sustains a work-related needlestick and/or sharps injury

Possible Benefits:

Increased awareness by nurses, employers and policy makers of the continuing risks and dangers of preventable workplace needlestick injuries will result in effective workplace changes that eliminate dangerous practices and result in improvements to the health and safety of nurses and other healthcare workers.

Range of Direct Costs:

Direct costs are estimated to range from between \$1,500 to \$7,000 for costs of developing policy, drafting potential legislation or regulations and developing educational materials. Additional costs include costs of activities related to:

- Staff time for meetings with the Washington State Hospital Association leadership and to develop and send letters to all Washington State hospitals' Health and Safety Committees urging them to establish
- Staff time to work with the Washington State Department of Health, The Sharps Program, the Washington Legislature and other appropriate regulatory agencies
- Continued work with WCN, WNLC, employers and other groups to develop comprehensive workplace strategies to address workplace fatigue.
- Lobbyist time as needed