

Group moves to prevent unethical recruitment of foreign-educated nurses

Business, labor, educators and advocates unite, release code of conduct for the recruitment of foreign-educated nurses to the United States

Washington, D.C. – In September 2008, a task force representing unions, health care organizations, educational and licensure bodies, and recruiters released the *Voluntary Code of Ethical Conduct for the Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Nurses to the United States*.

The code aims to ensure that the growing practice of recruiting foreign-educated nurses to the United States is done in a responsible and transparent manner. "There are concerns that the rapid increase in international recruiting creates opportunities for unethical behavior on both sides," says Patricia Pittman, Ph.D., Executive Vice President of AcademyHealth, who convened the task force and led a recent study of the structure and practices of the U.S.-based international recruitment industry. "This task force brought together stakeholders with differing – and sometimes conflicting – perspectives who nonetheless worked together to find a consensus solution that protects the rights of foreign educated nurses and, in doing so, promotes quality patient care."

AcademyHealth, in a report funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, identified almost 300 U.S.-based international nurse recruitment firms, a tenfold increase in the number of companies since the late 1990s. During the same time period, the annual percentage of newly licensed, foreign-educated registered nurses in the United States rose from five percent to 16 percent, based on data from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

The AcademyHealth study found some foreign-educated nurses who described situations in which they were subjected to unfair labor conditions, questionable contract practices, and threats related to their immigration status. Conversely, employers and recruiters point to cases where nurses have breached their contracts after receiving

assistance with immigration and resettlement. The Code of Conduct aims to increase transparency and accountability in international recruitment and ensure adequate orientation programs for foreign educated nurses. It also provides guidance on ways to ensure recruitment is not harmful to the nurses' home countries. The Code is wholly voluntary; health care organizations and recruiters that subscribe are committing to adhere to a series of practical standards and to emulate best practices.

"To migrate to the United States and improve one's professional and economic life is the hope and dream of a majority of Filipino nurses," says May Mayor, immediate past president of PNAA. It is important that all parties – nurse, recruiter, and employer – involved in the process of recruitment and migration be cognizant of inherent ethical responsibilities and obligations."

"As a recruiter of foreign-educated nurses and the President of the American Association for International Health Care Recruitment, I am appalled by reports of unethical conduct identified during the research phase of this project," said Shari Sandifer, CEO of Avant Healthcare Professionals. "We adhere to the highest standards and believe it is critically important for others in our industry to do likewise. That is why we joined forces with this group – to proactively set a standard of fair and transparent practices that all parties involved in the recruitment process can embrace."

The Code evolved from the recognition that there is no single cause for the nursing shortage and that there are diverse solutions to ensure supportive, productive work environments for all nurses in the United States. In particular, there was widespread agreement among Task Force members that international recruitment needs to be conducted in an ethical way that balances diverse stakeholder interests.



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"The nursing workforce shortage is a very real problem and our association is working to improve the situation on a number of fronts," says Linda J. Stierle, MSN, RN, CNAA, BC, CEO of the American Nurses Association. "In the meantime, we want to be sure that our colleagues who are recruited internationally are treated fairly and are also properly educated and trained. That, we believe, is in the interest of all nurses and the public we serve. ANA supports this important effort to establish a code for international recruitment."

The Code has been endorsed by these and a number of other groups, including the American Organization of Nurse Executives, AFT Healthcare, the Service Employees International Union, the American Hospital Association, the American Association of International Healthcare

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Recruitment, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the American Health Care Association, and the National Association for Home Care and Hospice.

"Fair and ethical recruitment is one way we ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to care for our patients," says Richard Umbdenstock, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association. "We're proud to have been part of this initiative from the beginning and to join with other stakeholders in taking a leadership position of endorsing the Code."

New pricing for VisaScreen®: Visa Credentials Assessment

CGFNS International has announced new pricing, effective January 1, 2009, for its VisaScreen®: Visa Credentials Assessment. The new price will be US\$498.00.

Time has increased to enter and process documents

CGFNS is currently experiencing an unanticipated number of documents being received on behalf of applicants. As a result, we have observed an overall increase in our average time for entering and processing documents received. It is currently taking CGFNS approximately 15-20 business days to enter and process documents received on behalf of applicants. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

A copy of the Code of Conduct, list of endorsing organizations and background study are available at www.fairinternationalrecruitment.org.

The initial research and resulting task force initiative were funded through a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. More information is at www.macfound.org. AcademyHealth, in partnership with the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University, facilitated the consensus-building process.

ENDORSERS

AFT Healthcare
American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)
American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment (AAIHR)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Health Care Association (AHCA)
American Healthcare Services
American Hospital Association (AHA)
American Nurses Association (ANA)
American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
Assignment America Inc.,
an affiliate of Cross Country Healthcare, Inc.
Avant Healthcare Professionals Cambridge Staffing Solutions, LLC Cambridge Healthcare, a division of Cambridge Global Services
District of Columbia Board of Nursing
Hammond Law Group, LLC
HCCA International
Health Carousel, LLC
Institute of California, Bilingual Medical Staffing
International MedLink, Inc.
Johns Hopkins Health System Lloyd Healthcare Staffing, a division of Advantis Healthcare Solutions
Morrison Public Affairs
National Association for Home Care and Hospice (NAHC)
National Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA)
National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL)
National Council for State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)
New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)
Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare (SEIU)
O'Grady-Peyton, International, a division of AMN Healthcare
Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA)
Procure USA, LLC (Nursing USA, Inc)
Realizing Rights
Reliable Healthcare Services, Inc.
RN India, Inc.
Sigma Theta Tau International
St. John's Health Network

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Commission on Filipinos Overseas
CGFNS International
Philippine Nurses Association, Inc. (PNA)

