



PAMBANSANG SAMAHAN NG MGA NARS NG PILIPINAS, INC.

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THE PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION'S POSITION PAPER ON "VOLUNTEERISM" CUM "TRAINING"

The Philippine Nurses Association affirms its responsibility to protect the rights and general welfare of the Filipino nurses as the largest workforce in the health sector. Nurses as public health servants, whether in public or private institutions, are entitled to a decent work environment as they continue to render health services to their clients.

A training program is supposed to be part of an orientation program designed for new employees and should be provided free by the employing **local government unit, private or government health facility**. To "train" them in the policies and procedures, is really part of the orientation program for new employees and should not take place of what is conceived to be lacking in their previous education.

By definition, "to volunteer," means to give of one's time to render work willingly without pay or remuneration. But usually, the volunteer is issued a "certificate" indicating number of hours rendered under training. The nurse is assumed to have undergone a certain program of training and is presumed to have added to her qualification for employment as a nurse. They are taken in as "volunteers" or "trainees" or "apprentices" provided allowance for food and/or transportation or free meals during duty hours.

What is questionable however, is when a nurse (registered or under board) is required to pay a "training fee" for the said program. Those who have disclosed their experience at being made to pay for a "training program" where they wish to apply in are disheartened, at the least, but feel hopeless to oppose the arrangement. They just submit and shell out the "training fee" to be in the shortlist of applicants hoping to get the first shot at a vacancy. Or that the certificate of training completion will be good enough to meet the "experience requirement" for employment overseas.

It is admitted, though not openly, that training programs for a fee is part of revenue enhancement measures to augment operational budgets. This is a policy already implemented and are reflected as "fee for use" of certain gadgets and other increments.

There is no question to place a training program to strengthen its nursing service but what is questionable is that these institutions should even charge professional nurses who are assumed to have already earned enough competence and is in fact eligible by law for employment with the corresponding remuneration and benefits on an entry level. Adding to the fact, that if they are not regular employees, they are not legally responsible for professional negligence. This may constitute unfair labor practice. But more so ethically because it shows non-recognition or disrespect for the nursing standards and nursing preparation we provide for those who wish to join the service.

This practice of “volunteerism” and “training for a fee” are on-going with variances of implementation. It is part of revenue generation or cost cutting, whichever way. It has an ethical dimension to it aside from the legal questions. The Association understands the premise on which this practice stands and that includes an oversupply of nursing manpower with no clear employment opportunities ahead much less a concrete career path.

The Philippines is producing an average of 60,000 registered nurses every year, creating the problem of unemployment and underemployment. They are vulnerable victims of unfair labor practices in order to augment their basic daily survival needs. Others become “willing volunteers” in health institutions performing regular functions of a nurse without pay. Others are casuals, nursing aides, accept salaries way below the minimum and even allow the salary of one plantilla position be divided into two nurses.

The profession and the practice are confronted with serious problems notably inadequate wages and poor work conditions. These are real problems we see and hear from many of our rank-and-file nurses. The same factors that “push” many of our colleagues to seek employment overseas and the reason only 15% of employed nurses chose to stay in the country while the 85% of Filipino nurses are spread in the four corners of the world.

The issue of “volunteerism” has been raised to us and is not an imagined thing. We view it with concern and as the professional association must address the issue because it involves the welfare of our nurses. On the reaction from some quarters that we are wrong, it is our hope too, that we are, and we would be glad to be proven wrong. But charges and countercharges will not establish the truth of the matter even if this is indeed a logical consequence of the oversupply of nursing manpower that cannot be accommodated by our hospital system. It serves to remind the Association and the State however, of the need to rationalize the nursing production and to find ways to absorb the thousand of nurses who lack jobs in the country where nursing services, especially at the community level or at the primary level, are sorely lacking.

We challenge our fellow nurses in responsible positions and likewise our local leaders to look closely into the problems and concerns of our nurses because they can be a critical force and source of development. Let us give dignity and pride to the caring profession by creating plantilla positions for our nurses in the community level. The implementation Nursing Law of 2002 and the Magna Carta of Public Health Workers while too long overdue, continue to remain at the backburner of priorities by our national leaders. Let us send “nurses to the barrios” and “nurses to barangays”. We are now encouraging our nurses to “hang their shingles” so they can collect professional fees.

Given this situation, the **Philippine Nurses Association** hereby proposes the following:

I. **Training Programs for Nurses** - Only tertiary hospitals will provide trainings for nurses, to be accredited by the PRC-Board of Nursing CPE Council.

II. **On the Job Orientation Programs for Nurses**

- a. no training fees ;
- b. provide stipend, transportation and food allowance while orientation;
- c. after three months they should be regular staff nurses and salaried.
- d. be provided with humane and safe working conditions similar to the hired nurses working in the health facility; and
- e. The Department of Health (DOH) to oversee and manage assignment of nurses who will go on service to different institutions.

The issue of “volunteerism” must be squarely addressed so as to provide us the opportunity to identify strategies and create programs to help our nurses to be acknowledged not by exploitation but by treating them decently and with dignity.



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