



Idaho Board of Nursing

Position Statement

Safety to Practice

One essential element of safe practice is a licensee's cognitive and functional ability to deliver competent and reliable care at any given time.

The board acknowledges that licensees may experience situations that could compromise their ability to safely practice for either the short or long term. Examples of circumstances that may impair normal abilities include but are not limited to: personal or job-related stress, sleep deprivation or fatigue, the normal effects of aging, and episodic or persistent health conditions, some of which may require pain management or the use of maintenance-level prescribed medication. Whether a licensee should practice under these, or other circumstances is highly dependent on all relevant variables such as diagnosis, individual response to prescribed treatment and risks inherent in the care setting and client population being served.

Constant evaluation of one's ability to safely and competently practice is the responsibility of each individual. However, in their role to protect the public the Board of Nursing is the ultimate decision maker. It may be necessary for the board to require objective testing of cognitive and/or functional abilities, by qualified licensed professionals. For example, even though an individual licensee might perceive themselves as capable of safe practice, neuropsychiatric testing may indicate impairment.

Licensees are accountable for assuring that their actions and behaviors meet all applicable standards at all times. In addition, licensees are ethically obligated to report to other members of the healthcare team whose actions place the public at risk. This requires self-awareness, a commitment to ethical standards, and a process of critical evaluation of the demands of a given practice situation in relation to the individual's status.

Licensees who practice while not fit to do so may be subject to the full range of disciplinary actions by the board.

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