



What You Need to Know about Hospital Nurse Staffing Standards

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is the government agency that oversees regulatory standards related to health care. Hospital-specific regulations are spelled out in Chapter 4, which covers everything from building and fire safety provisions to patient rights, including Nursing Services. Among other things, **the regulations in Chapter 4 concerning Nursing Services specify the nurse staffing standards that acute care hospitals must comply with.**

In 2020, the Colorado Nurses Association, the Colorado Organization of Nurse Leaders, Colorado Hospital Association and others met to develop significant changes to the Nursing Services section of the Chapter 4 regulations, which went into effect in October, 2021.

What do the changes to Chapter 4 do for nurses?

Empower Nurses

- **Create** new rules requiring hospitals to develop and implement a master nurse staffing plan using a staffing committee model with at least 50 percent of the members being frontline nurses
- **Require** nurse leaders to share unit-based master nurse staffing plans with each nursing employee annually
- **Provide** an avenue for nursing staff to raise concerns through an anonymous report to the state if they feel that their work environment is unsafe or impacting quality of care

Set Standards

- **Increase** the minimum staffing requirement to one nurse and one auxiliary staff on duty in each open inpatient care unit and add the emergency department to the regulation for the first time
- **Update** language to require that a master nurse staffing plan includes 24-hour continuous registered nurse coverage, distribution of nursing and auxiliary personnel, and forecasting future needs
- **Add** a requirement that each open inpatient care unit within a hospital must now have a 24-hour nurse staffing plan

Increase Oversight

- **Require** that master nurse staffing plans and annual reports on staffing and patient outcomes are provided to CDPHE upon request
- **Require** that an annual report with patient and staff outcomes is made to the hospital governing body on the master nurse staffing plan
- **Detail** that hospitals found to be out of compliance with statute or regulations will be cited and must take corrective action; further noncompliance or subsequent deficiencies could result in actions against a hospital's license

