

Middle Tennessee State University
School of Nursing
Professional Conduct Policy

The following professional conduct policy applies to all undergraduate upper-division nursing students in both the traditional BSN, MSN and Post-Master's Certificate tracks.

1. Professional conduct within the nursing program involves safeguarding the client and the public from incompetent, unethical, or illegal practices. Confidentiality and protection of client privacy is a priority consideration in professional conduct.

Students will not under any circumstances discuss any patient, hospital, clinic or staff information outside the confines of the classroom, clinical, or post-conference area and/or without the direction and guidance of clinical faculty, preceptor or clinical supervisor. If at any time a student has a concern regarding an occurrence in the clinical setting, the student is to discuss the concern with the clinical faculty, preceptor and/or appropriate member of nursing team at the clinical agency.

Failure to comply with confidentiality policy may result in dismissal from the program.

Any student determined to pose a threat to self, client or others due to the following will be asked to leave the clinical setting:

1. Physical and/or mental deficits, or
2. Inappropriate or unprofessional conduct

This constitutes failure to meet the performance standards of nursing practice and may result in appropriate action up to dismissal from the program.

The involved student and faculty member will progress through the process identified below:

- a) Course faculty contacts Director when faced with a situation or case possibly resulting in potential dismissal.
- b) Director forms ad hoc panel composed of three (3) nursing faculty with no conflict of interest.
- c) Panel will review documentation regarding case and hold a separate hearing for both student and faculty.
- d) Panel will forward recommendation for dismissal/non-dismissal to Director with an explanation of the reasons for the recommendation.
- e) Director will notify the student of the decision.
- f) Any appeal will be filed with the Director of the School of Nursing.

Clinical professional behavior is an academic issue. Faculty reserve the right to determine each student's eligibility to participate in clinical rotations based upon satisfactory preparation, and meeting SON and clinical agency's policies, and performance at a safe level of practice.

If any of these are not satisfactory, faculty may give the student an unsatisfactory grade and ask a student to leave the clinical agency for the day.

2. **1000-1-.13 Unprofessional Conduct and Negligence. Habits or Other Cause.** Unprofessional conduct has been defined by the Tennessee Board of Nursing. A copy of the Administrative Rules is on file in the School of Nursing Office. Because drug and/or alcohol abuse is considered to be unprofessional conduct, the Tennessee board of Regents Drug and Alcohol Policy and Testing Procedure is presented on the pages following the Unprofessional Conduct list. Additionally, violations of MTSU School of Nursing Student Honor Code are considered unprofessional.
3. **63-7-107 Nursing Tennessee Code of Unannotated Title 63. Chapter 7 (TN Code)**
Any action or behavior which violates the about will be grounds for dismissal form the nursing program.

63-7-107. Use of registered nurse title. Any person who holds a license to practice professional nursing under this chapter shall, during the effective period of such license, be entitled to use the title Registered Nurse of the abbreviation R.N.

No other person shall assume such title or use such abbreviation or any other words, letters, or signs to indicate the person using the same is a professional nurse.

4. **Drug and Alcohol Abuse.** If a student appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or in functioning in any impaired manner, the faculty or hospital personnel responsible for the student have the responsibility for dismissing the student form clinical experience that day.

The Drug and Alcohol Testing Procedure and the Four (4) Step Process for Documenting and Imposing the Penalties for Unprofessional Conduct Policy will be followed. If the student subsequently returns to the class/clinical setting, all absences must be made up.

- i. ***Alcohol:*** The use of alcohol by any students while performing assigned responsibilities is prohibited. "Being under the influence" means that the

student is affected by alcohol in any detectable manner which interferes with safe performance or of duties.

Symptoms of influence are not confined to those consistent with misbehavior, not to obvious impairments of physical and mental ability, e.g. slurred speech or difficulty in maintaining balance. A determination of "influence" can be established by a professional opinion, a scientifically valid test, and in some cases such as alcohol, by a lay person's opinion.

- ii. Legal Drugs: Being under the influence of a legal drug, prescribed or self-administered, by any student while performing assigned responsibilities is prohibited to extent that such use or influence may affect safety of self, patients, co-workers or the public.

If it is determined that the student does not pose a threat to safety of others and that performance is not affected, the student will be allowed to carry out assigned responsibilities.

- iii. Illegal Drugs: The use, sale, purchase, transfer or possession by any student of an illegal drug, which is defined as any drug (1) which is not legally obtainable or (2) which is legally obtainable but has been legally obtained, is prohibited.

This also includes marijuana. The presence in any detectable amount of any illegal drugs while performing assigned responsibilities is prohibited.

- iv. Students may be subject to take blood tests, urinalysis and/or other drug/alcohol screening tests when clinical supervisory personnel (faculty or hospital employee), fellow students or a student's self-professed use determine that the circumstances justify testing.

A student's consent to submit to such tests is required as a condition of acceptance into program of study. A student's refusal to submit to such tests may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program of study.

Repeat random testing may occur at the discretion of the SON director. Any refusal to submit to such testing may result in disciplinary action or dismissal from the program. The cost of this testing will be assumed by the student.

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