

Covenant School of Nursing
Disciplinary Action Summary Assignment
Instructional Module 2

Student Name: Jessica H Longoria

Date: 10/25/2024

DAS Assignment #: 1

Name of the defendant (nurse): Karen Elizabeth Wallace

Type of License: RN

License # of the defendant: 830377

Date action was taken against the license: 02/13/2024

Type of action taken against the license: Enforced Suspension

- *Use the space below to describe the events which led to the action(s) taken against the license. If multiple charges were in play, be sure and cite them, e.g. drug diversion, HIPAA violation, abandonment, forfeiture on student loans, etc.*

Nurse Karen E Wallace had multiple serious violations while caring for patients in a clinical setting. Some of these violations included abandonment, failing to maintain a safe environment for the patient, failing to protect the patient from unethical, illegal or incompetent conduct and acts of unprofessional conduct. Rule 217.11 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) requires nurses to maintain a safe environment for the patient. Additionally, rules in Texas Administrative Code §217.12 identify behaviors in the practice of nursing that are likely to deceive, defraud or injure clients or the public. Actual injury to a client need not be established and behaviors include those such as unprofessional and unsafe conduct(s).

On or about September 26th, 2020 nurse Karen Wallace violated these rules by abandoning her nursing assignment when she left the unit on a lunch break and failed to return to the unit to complete her scheduled shift. The nurse also failed to notify her supervisor that she would not be returning to complete her shift. The nurse exposed her patients unnecessarily to risk of harm in that leaving the nursing assignment could have resulted in the patients not getting the care they needed.

A few days later, on or about September 29, 2020 nurse Karen E Wallace lacked fitness to practice nursing in that she exhibited impaired behavior, including erratic behavior and was unable to follow conversations with co-workers. Then the nurse refused to submit a specimen for a for-cause drug screen. This is a also a huge violation because her condition could have affected her ability to recognize subtle signs, symptoms or changes in patients' conditions, and could have affected her ability to make rational, accurate, and appropriate assessments, judgements, and decisions regarding her patients' care, thereby placing the patients in potential danger. In accordance with rule TAC 217.12(5), the nurse was unable to practice nursing with reasonable skill

and safety to clients, this can be due to: illness, use of alcohol, drugs, chemicals, or any other mood-altering substances, any mental or physical condition.

- Use the space below to provide a description of measures you think could have prevented any action being taken against the license and/or would have prevented harm to the patient, if harm occurred.

There are several measures that could have prevented the actions taken against the nurse's license and prevented the risk of harm of the nurse's patients, In regard to her first violation of not returning to work to complete her shift without notification, the nurse should have notified, at the minimum, her co-worker of her absence before leaving her nursing assignment. Communication is key, even in an emergency situation where the nurse was not able to return to work, the nurse should remain in control and vocalize her need to leave her nursing assignment or her not able to return and care for her patients' to her supervisor who can better accommodate a nurse replacement for the patients. Another alternative is using the facility's urgent/emergency dedicated phone line to communicate her absence. Medical facilities all have dedicated phone lines for emergency calls, it should be in the nurse's scope of knowledge to make note of these dedicated phone lines for when an emergency should arise. All of these options would eliminate the amount of time her patients were without proper care.

As for the nurse's exhibiting impaired behavior, the nurse stated she had been drinking the night before this incident and did not remember the exact circumstance and did remember being hungover at work. One preventable measure the nurse could of taken was simply call into work for that day or half day, calling into work is by far a better choice than to come into work with even with just the lack of even, let alone impaired. She also could have responsibly chosen not to consume alcohol the night before her early morning shift or consume limited amount of alcohol. I feel like this violation was definitely an characteristic reflection of irresponsibility on the nurse's behalf.

- Identify ALL universal competencies were violated and explain how.

Safety and Security: Violated because the nurse did not promote trust and respect. In both the recorded instances the nurse showed little respect for her patients by either not providing care at all or by providing inadequate skillful care. These patients trusted the nurse with their health.

Communication: Violated because the nurse did not communicate her absence in a nursing assignment to her supervisor or anyone for that matter. In turn she did not utilize resources to enable communication consistent with agency protocols.

Critical Thinking: Violated because when the nurse exhibited impaired behavior she was unable to think clearly, therefore affecting her ability to make appropriate decision making, prioritize task/procedures, evaluate and revise interventions and perform assessments related to patient symptoms.

Human Caring: Violated because as stated early the nurse showed little respect for her patients by either not providing care at all or by providing inadequate skillful care.

Professional Role: Violated because her lack of interaction with her peers and staff about her absence in her nurse scheduled assignment. Her lack of communication (No call No show) is a reflection of her unprofessional.

- Use the space below to describe what action you think a prudent nurse would take as the first to person to discover the event described. In other words, you are the one who discovers the patient has been harmed by the nurse or you have discovered the impairment or criminal activity cited in the disciplinary action.

I'll start with the first circumstance, where the nurse left her nursing assignment and did not return to complete her shift. As soon as I noticed her patients were going uncared for, I would notify the charge nurse and head nurse and ask for support to help assess all patients in need of care and verify they are not in risk of further harm. Each patient's airway is clear, they are able to breathe and assess their blood circulation, next priority would be any missed medications. I would notify any physicians if any medications were past the time of administration. I would also establish a game plan for how the nurse's patients would be cared for the remainder of the nurse's scheduled shift. The patient's safety would be my priority and protecting them from any further risk of harm. Also I would notify the Texas Board of Nursing of the nurse's unprofessional actions and raise my concerns.