

Health Workers' Rights

As health workers we should all be aware of our rights. A fair workplace has benefits for employers and employees.

Join the union

You have a right to decide whether you join a union.

Respect

While you have an obligation to do your job, your employer has an obligation to respect your culture, values and beliefs, preserve your privacy and recognise your strengths.

Fair treatment

Your employment agreement and workplace policies must protect union members from all forms of discrimination. You should be free from discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, race, beliefs, marital or family status, sexual orientation or disability. As a worker you need to be careful to afford the same respect to others in the workplace.

Dignity and good faith

The Employment Relations Act 2000 states that employment relationships must be built on good faith behaviour. Both you and your employer must observe this legal requirement. Good faith means not taking any action that would deceive or mislead the other party.

Health and safety

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 outlines the responsibility of both employers and employees in the provision of a healthy and safe workplace. Healthy and safe means free from physical and emotional harm. All hazards must be eliminated, isolated or minimised by the employer and protective equipment must be provided to employees. Training must be offered to you for all safety issues: as a new employee, where the job changes; or where new technology is introduced.

Communication and change

Most difficulties in the workplace occur as a consequence of poor communication. You have the right to have your say and be listened to about issues that affect you in the workplace. In regard to workplace communication and change you have the following rights:

- > to know about things that affect your job;
- > to consider changes that affect your job;
- > to respond;
- > employer consideration of the views you put forward.

Access to information

There will be times when workplace information needs to be kept confidential and/or treated with discretion. You and your employer must abide by the Privacy Act when dealing with any personal information. As an employee you have a right to access your personnel file. You can ask your employer directly or make an official request under principle 6 of the Privacy Act 1993.

Support

You have the right to support in meetings about issues pertaining to your employment with your employer. This could be a friend, colleague, delegate (workplace representative), or NZNO Organiser. You have a right to reschedule a meeting to a time when you can have a support person or representative with you. If you are

requested to attend a meeting about a workplace problem you should always take a support person.

Workplace democracy

The law now encourages you to act collectively and participate in your workplace. For this to be achieved you should be able to discuss your views openly with the support of your colleagues. By working together you will also have the strength to preserve and advance your pay and conditions of employment.

Speaking your own language

You have a right to speak your own language at work. Increasingly the first language of potential employees and health consumers will not be English. Generally you should not be prevented from speaking a language other than English in the workplace, unless there is a good business reason for this e.g. health and safety.

Date adopted: July 2014

Review date: July 2016

Principal author: Industrial resources group

Correspondence to: nurses@nzno.org.nz

Mission statement

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

© 2014 This material is copyright to the New Zealand Nurses Organisation.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced by any process, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the written permission of the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO), PO Box 2128, Wellington 6140.