



Position Statement

Prevention of disability and the care of people with disabilities

ICN Position:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) strongly believes that equal rights for the disabled must be fostered and protected, including, rights to education and employment, and the right to full involvement in matters that affect their lives. ICN supports programmes designed to integrate people with disabilities in all aspects of daily life - in the family, school, workplace and community.

Nurses are key to early detection and intervention, and need to be involved in health promotion, prevention, teaching and counselling programs for people with disabilities and their families.

Nurses can play a significant role in policy and planning aimed at improving the quality of life and care for people with disabilities and in the prevention of disability.

Nursing education programmes should address the role of nursing in the prevention of disability as a result of injury or illness.

ICN collaborates with other concerned organisations and associations to increase cooperation in advocating for the rights and freedoms of disabled persons and to mobilise and support technology, research and resources for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

National nurses' associations (NNAs) should play a visible role in influencing and advocating public policy on the care of people with disabilities, including lobbying for the creation of environments that facilitate access and communication for those citizens with disabilities. Nursing research that contributes to effective policy development in this area should be supported.

ICN recognises the value of community based rehabilitation, where this is the choice of the disabled person.

Background:

A disabled person is someone with a physical, mental, sensory, or social impairment which, in the long term, adversely affects their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

NNAs can support programmes for the care for persons with disabilities, the prevention of disability, and the rights and freedoms of disabled persons by collaborating with other disciplines and organizations to:

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- Identify the major causes of disability and to assist in determining and implementing the measures needed to reduce and eliminate these.
- Ensure that services for prevention, care and rehabilitation are initiated and/or expanded.
- Educate the public so that people with disabilities may be integrated within society to the fullest possible extent.

Strategies to maximise nursing effectiveness include:

- Ensuring that nursing education: addresses competencies necessary for the prevention of disability and the care and rehabilitation of people with disabilities; promotes fuller understanding of the particular problems faced by people with disabilities and their families; and, includes advocacy skills and a knowledge of programmes and resources in the community.
- Assisting, supporting and advocating for persons with disabilities and their families to access education, information and support services that allow them to lead fulfilling lives.
- Assessing:
 - maternal/child and adolescent services, to ensure children/youth are not disabled through poor maternal and child health services, malnutrition, poor hygiene, lack of immunization, domestic violence or lack of appropriate counselling to parents;
 - occupational health services, to ensure safety regulations are respected;
 - community health programmes, to ensure adequate health teaching is carried out for the prevention of accidents and illness.
- Carrying out research, for example into the prevention of disability, promotion of rehabilitation and the integration of people with disabilities within a community.

Adopted in 2000

Reviewed and revised in 2010

Resources:

WHO: www.who.int/disabilities/en

UN: International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable

Related ICN Positions:

- Reducing Environmental and Lifestyle-related Health Hazards
- Nurses and Primary Health Care

The International Council of Nurses is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.