

Position of The Seychelles Nurses & Midwives Council

Working Hours -Fact sheet

AIM: The Nurses and Midwives Council position statement below is aimed to enlighten nurses and midwives on the position of the council vis-à-vis overtime work.

As professional Nurses and Midwives, we are responsible and accountable for our decisions, nevertheless we are equally obliged to be reasonable and perform at an acceptable standard. We are also guided by our professional codes of ethics and conduct and the Nurses and Midwives Act, 1985, governing the profession. As an employee of the government or non-governmental organization it is clear from our employment contract that we have to satisfy certain terms and conditions laid down in our contract with our employer.

The Seychelles Nurses and Midwives Council does not specify the number of extra hours a nurse should work, but as a professional nurse, we should use our judgment in deciding on the number of extra hours we can work. While it is the responsibility of the nurse/midwife and employer to find balance between work and time off, ultimately it will remain the nurses'/midwives' decision to determine how much stress, anxiety and fatigue she can tolerate. Nurses in management and administrative roles are also accountable to ensure that, what is best for the practice of the profession is encouraged in giving quality care.

In this same vein the International Labor Organization Nursing Personnel Convention (ILO), 1977 N0. 149, also ratified by Seychelles in 1993, Section VIII, addresses working time and rest period states in 33. (2) that the working day, including overtime, should not exceed 12hours.The ILO convention further indicates in 33.(3) that temporary exceptions to the provisions of this paragraph should be authorized only in special case of emergency.

When deciding about overtime accountability and commitment need to be weighed carefully against the degree of fatigue that the nurse is experiencing. Studies have revealed that psychological as well as physical stress increases frustration and risk of errors. Whilst the nurse wants to do extra shifts for financial reason, ethical consideration in assessing the ability to give quality care should be a priority in decision making.