

TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE HOLSCHLAG, RN, PRESIDENT AFSCME LOCAL 3145

RE: RAISED BILL 6277

FEB. 9, 2011

My name is Christine Holschlag and I am a registered nurse. I have worked for the Red Cross in Connecticut for over 7 years. I also happen to be the President of AFSCME 3145 which represents over 200 union workers for the Connecticut Red Cross Blood Services.

Last March, I had testified on similar language that is being presented today. Before I address the actual bill, I feel it's important to bring a few things to light since last year. Since last session, we have lost almost half the amount of nurses we had working on mobile collection sites (five out of 14 RNs). Since that time, Red Cross management has only hired one Registered Nurse and only after going through the grievance process on the basis of discrimination. That person was me.

Last March, former Senator Harris had asked me during my testimony if anyone had died after giving blood. At that time, I was not prepared to answer that. The answer is yes. We are responsible for filling out a Fatality Report in the event of a death. The FDA then must investigate the cause of death and whether or not it's related to the actual blood donation process. There is an annual Donor Fatality Report released each year on the FDA website. As for Connecticut, I'm aware of at least one death that took place since our hearing last year. I can comment that there was not a nurse at that particular drive.

It would be inappropriate for me to say that the death could've been prevented, but I will say that a licensed professional who has been trained in assessing patients is more adept at picking up on signs of early distress. And that's the whole point: Why wait for a death. Front line staff constantly sees adverse reactions on blood drives that require a nurse's professional opinion and intervention.

Last March, during Dr. O'Neill's testimony she had made a bold and amazing statement that having an RN or LPN at every blood drive would be too costly and she would shut the state down and get blood elsewhere. While only up until recently we had only RNs in charge at every blood drive, I will set that fact aside for a moment and address the cost concern. Rather than hiring RNs, licensed health care professionals, to oversee the safety of the blood collection process and Connecticut donors they have instead hired supervisors to be at every drive with a goal of 25 products or more.

What credentials might these supervisors have? The supervisor job qualification requires "RN or LPN or equivalent". What is the equivalent of a degree and license? Of the almost 20 supervisors they have, only 3 of them have RNs. The majority of them have the highest educational level of a high school graduate. You might reason that they do this to save money. On the contrary, the salary of an unlicensed supervisor is well over \$10,000 more of a starting RN in the bargaining unit!

As for Dr. Pisciotto's statement last year that we only handle healthy donors, I found her statement surprising for two reasons:

(1) We handle patients that come in to donate blood for themselves...they might have cancer, they might be HIV positive, he list goes on.

(2) As a nurse, you can never presume that a person is healthy. There may be an underlying issue that even the donor is unaware of that may lead to a mild or severe reaction. Giving 1/10 of your blood will put a certain amount of stress on the heart that a healthy donor can handle and the heart will have to work a little harder to make up for the loss of oxygen and loss of blood.

While we have a screening process, it is not an all encompassing capture of reasons to rule out a donor. As a new nurse, I could sit here and give you example after example of times I've had to rule out a donor that the supervisor I was with would have not nor would they have thought to get the doctor's opinion. One recent example ,dealt with a donor presenting with a recent head injury which our guidelines do not address. The supervisor's rationale is if it's not on the health history questionnaire, its fine. That is a dangerous assumption.

In short, I strongly urge you to support the language requiring an RN or LPN at every blood drive collection site and I also urge you to amend the language regarding apheresis. Infusing biologics into a person is under a licensed health professional's scope of practice. If language is to pass allowing unlicensed staff to perform the apheresis procedures then it is crucial that is done under the supervision of a registered nurse trained in the apheresis procedures.

Thank you for your attention. Our union looks forward to working with you to ensure safe blood collection practices that put donors ahead of corporate profits.

**Red Cross Blood Services
Connecticut Region
Whole Blood Collections - Chain Of Command**

#1 -Shawana Rivero, Director of Nursing, RN

#2-Assistant Directors- Bobbi Cislo Dan Phillips Lisa Arnau, RN

Licensed Supervisors: Helen Caine, RN Supervisor, Diane Butler, RN Supervisor,
Linda Rego RN Supervisor, Clare O’Gorman LPN Supervisor

Unlicensed Supervisors-

[Redacted names of unlicensed supervisors]

Charge Nurses- Chris Guidice RN, Linda Kennedy RN, Chris Cunningham RN, Noreen LaCroix RN,
Melissa Carter RN, Linda Veleas RN, Sarah Emmons RN, Kelly Schiff RN, Theresa Arpie RN, Christine
Holschlag RN, [Redacted] Unlicensed, [Redacted] Unlicensed, [Redacted]
Unlicensed, [Redacted] Unlicensed, [Redacted] Unlicensed, [Redacted]
Unlicensed, [Redacted] Unlicensed, [Redacted] Unlicensed



**American
Red Cross**

Biomedical Services Job Description

Title:	<i>Team Supervisor</i>	Grade:	<i>10</i>
Family:	<i>Collections</i>	FLSA:	<i>Exempt</i>
Job Code:	<i>CO1004</i>	Date:	<i>September 2010</i>
Exposure Determination:	<i>1</i>	Approved:	<i>Total Rewards - COE</i>

Job Summary

Supervise blood collection (whole blood and apheresis) operations at fixed and/or mobile sites to ensure an efficient, effective and compliant process. Supervise staff, create a team environment and provide leadership needed to maintain premiere donor care, customer safety and satisfaction during the blood collection process.

Demonstrate excellent public relations to promote a positive, professional image of the American Red Cross. Work independently with attention to detail ensuring adherence to quality standards.

Perform all duties and responsibilities in compliance with standard operating procedures, Safety, Quality, Identity, Potency, Purity (SQUIPP), regulations outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and other applicable Federal, state and local regulations.

Responsibilities

1. Ensure blood drive compliance with applicable Federal, State and local regulations as well as all American Red Cross policies, procedures and guidelines. Ensure SQUIPP (safety, quality, identity, purity and potency) for all products collected under their supervision.
2. Plan, manage and direct all aspects of blood and/or apheresis collection operations (fixed site and/or mobile) to ensure an efficient and effective process. Recognize and correct donor flow inefficiencies. Monitor work area and practices to ensure a safe environment; take preventative and/or corrective action to prevent safety hazards and potential injuries to donors, volunteers and staff.
3. Supervise staff including hiring, training, evaluation, and discipline to ensure a well-qualified team and to enhance operational success. Monitor individual and group performance to improve overall team effectiveness.
4. Perform clerical administrative functions to provide documentation and ensure donor/recipient safety and to monitor staff competency. May perform or serve as a trainer for all blood collection procedures.
5. Meet or exceed donor, sponsor and other customer's service expectations. Seeks and uses customer feedback to improve services.

6. Ensure effective internal and external communication between all department levels and functions to foster teamwork and enhance operational success.
7. Complete required readings and training assignments by assigned deadline. Documentation of training/communication for team is accurate and timely.
8. Support activities to recruit/re-sign donors and other process improvement initiatives.
9. Perform other related duties as necessary.

Scope

Supervise and oversee all aspects of daily blood collections operations. Perform, assess and provide training for blood collection activities as needed. Responsible for supervision of team of line staff. Ensure team focus on customers. May operate ARC vehicles in compliance with regulations.

Must balance production, customer service and compliance on a daily basis, ensuring integrity of operation.

Qualifications

Bachelor Degree, RN/LPN or equivalent combination of related education and experience required, with current state licensure as required. Minimum two years related experience required. Supervisory experience preferred. Related experience includes medical, technical, supervisory experience or documented satisfactory performance as a Collections Specialist. Customer service experience required. Effective verbal communication and public relations skills are required. A current valid driver's license and good driving record is required. Proficient with Microsoft office applications.

Competencies

The duties and responsibilities mentioned in the job description are representative of the essential functions of the position. The performance management system incorporates competencies which are identified, discussed and evaluated in order to meet operational milestones and which are tied to job families and titles. Three types of competencies have been identified; Technical Competencies are job specific skills and methods, Core Competencies are the abilities and behaviors expected of all Biomedical Services employees, Leadership Competencies are specific abilities and behaviors required of those performing formal management roles or other leadership roles (i.e. Project Leaders). Management and staff should contact Human Resources for further details on the appropriate competencies for a specific position.

Essential Functions/Physical Requirements

The duties above indicate the essential functions of the position. Operational flexibility is required to meet sudden and unpredictable needs. Physical requirements may include the ability to lift, push or pull heavy weights up and down ramps and stairs, good manual dexterity, the ability to sit or stand for long periods of time and adapt to long, irregular hours and frequent schedule changes is required.

Exposure levels are based on the essential functions as stated in this position description; however, in some instances, variances may occur due to the applicable nature of this position within a particular work site. Therefore the work site may determine the exposure level to be greater than or less than the below stated level.

This position is an exposure determination in view of the fact that the position requires the incumbent work under conditions where the potential exists for the incumbent to make contact with blood or blood components as a result of splashes, spills, and/or needlesticks.