



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Bill 283 - Safe Staffing Standards for Nurses

Sectional Analysis Ver. A

May 12, 2026

Section 1

Adds the following sections under Title 18, Chapter 20, which is the portion of state statutes pertaining to Hospitals and Nursing Facilities.

- Sec. 18.20.265(a) requires hospital to comply with the registered nurse minimum staffing standards established in the legislation.
- Sec. 18.20.265(b) describes the maximum number of patients each registered nurse may be assigned by unit during a shift. These standards describe the maximum number of patients permitted per bedside nurse by unit. Areas covered include the emergency department, intensive care unit, labor and delivery unit, operating room, medical surgery floor, progressive care or step-down unit, and psychiatric unit. These standards reflect generally accepted best practices across the country, decades of research, and the direct recommendations of Alaska's bedside nurses.
- Sec. 18.20.265(c)-(g) provide details regarding implementation of the requirements of Section 1, including specifying a virtual nurse may not be included to meet the registered nurse staffing standards and clarifying nothing in the bill prohibits hospitals from assigning fewer patients to a registered nurse than the maximum limits in this section. Another provision protects nurses from retaliation when they report staffing violations or refuse assignments that would violate safety standards.
- Sec. 18.20.270 requires hospitals to adopt a registered nurse staffing plan that includes minimum staffing levels for each unit in the hospital and specifies requirements that must be included in any staffing plan.
- Sec. 18.20.275 allows hospitals to deviate from the nurse minimum staffing standards established in the proposed AS 18.20.265, or the hospital's registered nurse staffing plan required by AS 18.20.270, because of an unforeseen emergency or weather conditions. Hospitals in rural communities may further deviate from the minimum staffing standards by declaring a nurse staffing emergency.

- Sec 18.20.280 requires hospitals to maintain a staffing committee to prepare the hospital's registered nurse staffing plan, with a requirement that at least 51 percent of committee members must be nurses employed in a non-supervisory capacity and whose primary work is to provide direct patient care. Other provisions describe the method for selecting committee members and developing the required plan. At least one member of the staffing committee must be a supportive direct patient care individual which is a defined term and includes nurse aides, orderlies, technicians or other persons providing direct care to patients.
- Sec. 18.20.285 requires hospitals to provide their staffing plan for the next calendar year to the Department of Health by October 1 of the prior year. Also requires quarterly report by hospitals to the department on compliance with their staffing plan.
- Sec. 18.20.290 permits the Department of Health to assess and collect a civil penalty for violations by hospitals who fail to follow their approved staffing plans.
- Sec. 18.20.295 provides definitions for key terms, including the definition of department, direct care, hospital, and supportive direct patient care personnel.

Section 2 Provides transition language requiring hospitals must implement their initial registered nurse staffing plan on or before January 1, 2027.

Section 3 Provides an immediate effective date for the bill.