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AN ANALYSIS
OF NURSYS®
DISCIPLINARY
DATA FROM
1996-2006



Report of Findings from

AN ANALYSIS OF NURSYS® DISCIPLINARY DATA FROM 1996-2006

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National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (NCSBN®)

Mission Statement

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
I. Introduction	1
II. Demographics	2
Number Disciplined	2
Multiple State Discipline	2
Race/Ethnicity	2
Type of License	2
Gender	3
Age at First Licensure	3
Years of Experience	4
Deceased	4
Basis for Licensure	4
III. Violations	5
IV. Actions	8
Actions for the Same Violation	8
V. Incidents	12
VI. Recidivism	13
VII. Criminal Convictions	14
VIII. Education	15
IX. International Training	16
X. Drug Related Violations	17
XI. Medication Errors	18
XII. Study Limitations	19
XIII. Conclusions	20
XIV. Bibliography	21

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Number of Nurses Disciplined in Multiple States.	2
Table 2. Race/Ethnicity	2
Table 3. Nurses with Multiple Licenses.	2
Table 4. Number of Nurses with at Least One Action by Year and Type of Nurse	3
Table 5. Type of License	3
Table 6. Gender.	3
Table 7. Years of Experience.	4
Table 8. Basis for Licensure.	4
Table 9. Violations.	6
Table 10. Number of Violations Committed by a Nurse	7
Table 11. Violations by Year and Type of License.	7
Table 12. Actions.	8
Table 13. Type of Action	8
Table 14. Disciplinary Actions.	9
Table 15. Number of Actions by Year and Type of Nurse	9
Table 16. Actions for the Same Violation	10
Table 17. Actions Taken for Violations	11
Table 18. Number of Incidents Per Disciplined Nurse	12
Table 19. Country of Education	16
Table 20. Actions Taken For Drug Related Violations	17
Table 21. Actions Taken For Medication Errors Violation	18
Table 22. Missing Data	19

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Percentage of Nurses Disciplined by Year	2
Figure 2. Actions by Year	9
Figure 3. Percentage of Disciplined Nurses with Medication Error by Year	18

INTRODUCTION

There have been few studies examining disciplinary actions by state boards of nursing (BON). Researchers have mainly studied disciplinary actions as they apply to the incidence of medication errors or drug use among nurses. Nurses incur disciplinary action from BONs for many reasons. Grounds for discipline include fraud and deceit, criminal acts, substance abuse, mental incompetence, unprofessional conduct, incompetence due to negligence, and inability to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety. The BON may also discipline nurses for willful misconduct, such as diverting narcotics, misjudgment, or inappropriate action stemming from a lack of knowledge or a lapse in vigilance.

This report is based on data provided by BONs to Nursys® between January 1996 and December 2006. Nursys is a comprehensive electronic information system maintained by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN®) that includes nurse licensure and disciplinary information. At the end of 2006, 51 BONs reported data to Nursys and 44 (86%) of those BONs gave permission to use their disciplinary data for this study. Nurses who entered alternative to discipline or diversion programs were not identified and are not included in this study.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Number Disciplined

There were 52,695 nurses reported by the 44 BONs for a disciplinary action between January 1996 and December 2006. Over this time period, the number of disciplined nurses has increased from a low of 3,172 in 1996 to a high of 7,899 in 2006. This represents an increase of 149% in 11 years. However, the percentage of the nurse population that has been disciplined during this 11-year period has only increased from 0.10% to 0.18% (Figure 1).

Multiple State Discipline

For the most part, nurses are not disciplined in multiple states. Almost 96% were disciplined in only one state. Less than 4% of disciplined nurses were disciplined in two states (Table 1).

Race/Ethnicity

Among disciplined nurses, there was a slightly higher percentage of African-Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics than in the general nurse population, and slightly lower percentages of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Caucasians (Table 2).

Type of License

Of the 52,695 nurses included in this study, 1,876 (4%) held more than one type of nursing license (Table 3). Table 4 indicates the number of nurses with a disciplinary action by type of nursing license and year of action.

For analyses in this study involving type of license, unless otherwise specified, nurses were categorized according to the highest level of license obtained. For example, if a nurse was licensed as both an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) and a registered nurse (RN), they were considered an APRN. There were also 1,878 nurses who had the same action taken against both their RN and licensed practical nurse/vocational nurse (LPN/VN) licenses. When counting violations, actions and incidents, these duplicate sanctions were excluded and only sanctions against the higher level license were counted. Interestingly, when discipline was taken against an advanced practice license, the same

Figure 1. Percentage of Nurses Disciplined by Year

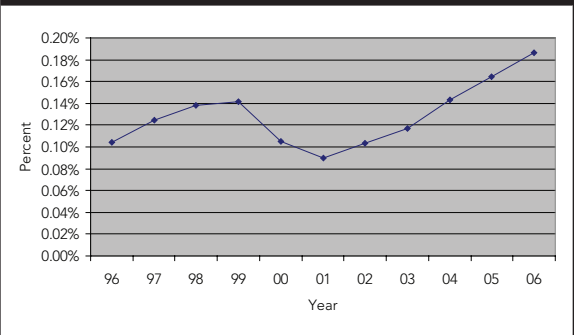


Table 1. Number of Nurses Disciplined in Multiple States

# of States Nurse Disciplined In	Number of Nurses	Percent of Disciplined Nurses
1	50,499	95.83
2	2,020	3.83
3	148	0.28
4	19	0.04
5	5	0.01
6	4	0.01

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of Nurse Population (National Sample Survey)
Asian/Pacific Islander	427	1.48	3.3
Black/African-American	2,896	10.01	4.60
Caucasian	23,564	81.41	88.40
Hispanic	1,193	4.12	1.80
Native American	516	1.78	0.40
Other	348	1.2	1.50

Table 3. Nurses with Multiple Licenses

Type of License	Frequency	Percent
APRN	345	0.65
APRN and LPN/VN	13	0.02
APRN and RN	164	0.31
APRN and RN and LPN/VN	9	0.02
LPN/VN	19,171	36.38
RN	31,303	59.40
RN and LPN/VN	1,690	3.21

Table 4. Number of Nurses with at Least One Action by Year and Type of Nurse

Year	All and types							Total	Nurse Population	Percent of Nurse Population
	APRN	APRN and LPN/VN	APRN and RN	APRN, RN and LPN/VN	LPN/VN	RN	RN and LPN/VN			
1996	4	0	0	0	1,217	1,921	30	3,172	3,864,632	0.08
1997	7	0	0	0	1,450	2,216	164	3,837	3,875,444	0.10
1998	15	1	3	0	1,572	2,472	110	4,173	3,973,455	0.11
1999	18	0	8	0	1,538	2,579	88	4,231	4,009,234	0.11
2000	44	1	14	0	1,147	1,711	74	2,991	4,006,135	0.07
2001	91	2	11	3	1,229	1,999	79	3,414	3,979,931	0.09
2002	48	1	22	0	1,536	2,656	83	4,346	4,064,628	0.11
2003	44	1	19	2	1,780	3,121	117	5,084	4,096,015	0.12
2004	28	4	30	3	2,114	3,859	205	6,243	4,179,974	0.15
2005	20	2	25	0	2,584	4,129	336	7,096	4,240,325	0.17
2006	26	1	32	1	2,936	4,517	386	7,899	4,363,206	0.18
Total	345	13	164	9	19,103	31,180	1,672	52,486		

Table 5. Type of License

Type of Nurse	Frequency	Percent of Disciplined Nurses	Type of Nurse Population	Percent of Type of Nurse Population
APRN	531	1	157,363	0.34
RN	32,993	63	3,416,946	1.00
LPN/VN	19,171	36	946,260	3.00

actions were not applied to either the associated RN or LPN/VN license.

There were statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between nurses with different types of nursing degrees. Although these percentages are very small, they do indicate that LPN/VNs are more likely to be disciplined than either APRNs or RNs (Table 5).

Gender

As Table 6 indicates, about 17% of the disciplined nurses were male and 83% were female. Among RNs, males represented 10.5% of the disciplined population. This still indicates a markedly higher proportion of males when compared to the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (HRSA, 2004), which estimates that males make up about 6% of the RN population.

Table 6. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	40,951	83.39
Male	8,157	16.61

Males were also overrepresented in this study among nurses who have been disciplined for drug related violations. Almost 18% of drug related violators were male.

Age at First Licensure

The average age at first licensure was 31.8, with a median of 30 and a mode of 23. Since ages ranged from -80 to 119, ages were restricted to between 17 and 79 years of age. In addition, 11,888 cases were missing date of licensure and therefore, age at licensure could not be determined.

Years of Experience

Table 7 reports the frequency of disciplinary actions based on years of experience. The average number of years a nurse had practiced at the time of the disciplinary action was almost 12 years: 4% had worked one year or less; about one-fifth of disciplined nurses had worked more than a year, but less than five years; another 27% had been a nurse for five years but less than 10 years; nurses who had worked between 10 and 24 years represented 39% of disciplined nurses; and 10.5% had worked for 25 or more years.

Given the concern over the transition of new nurses into practice and the focus on medical errors, these results need more in-depth analysis. New nurses are not being disciplined relative to other more experienced nurses. It is unknown whether this is because they truly are not committing as many violations or they are just not being reported.

Table 7. Years of Experience

Years	Percent
0 - 1	4.10
1.1 - 4.9	19.67
5 - 9.9	26.98
10 - 24	39.30
25+	10.50

Deceased

Of the disciplined nurses, 144 are deceased.

Basis for Licensure

Most of the disciplined nurses were licensed by exam (Table 8), one-fourth were licensed through endorsement and less than 1% were licensed by waiver.

Table 8. Basis for Licensure

	Frequency	Percent
Endorsement	11,377	26.15
Exam	32,064	73.70
Waiver	68	0.16

VIOLATIONS

The 114,570 violations committed by the 52,695 nurses were classified into 78 different types of violations (Table 9). Each disciplined nurse averaged two violations. Of those with multiple violations, the average number of violations was almost three per person. The number of violations has gone up about 72% in 11 years from 7,751 in 1996 to 13,300 in 2006.

Those with drug related violations (i.e., drug abuse, drug diversion [self], other drug related, alcohol abuse, drug use only, drug related conviction, writing illegal prescriptions, presenting illegal prescriptions, wastage errors, and drug diversion [others]) represented 25% of all violations. About 9% had a criminal violation and about 7% had committed and were disciplined for a medication error.

In almost half of the cases, the nurse was disciplined for only one violation (Table 10). The most violations any one nurse incurred was 30.

Of all the violations, 64% (n=68,838) were committed by RNs, 35% (n=37,798) by LPN/VNs and 1% (n=1,052) by APRNs (Table 11). RNs averaged 1.97 violations with LPN/VNs and APRNs averaging 1.98 and 2.09 respectively.

Table 9. Violations

Violation	Frequency	Percent	Violation	Frequency	Percent
Drug Abuse	8,565	7.48	Physical Abuse	727	0.63
Drug Diversion - Self	7,261	6.34	Voluntary Surrender	643	0.56
Other	6,653	5.81	Other Inability To Practice Safely	629	0.55
Failure To Maintain Minimal Standards	6,272	5.47	Verbal Abuse	551	0.48
Violating Board Order	6,236	5.44	Conviction Against Property	490	0.43
Documentation Errors	4,897	4.27	Drug Diversion - Others	435	0.38
Other Unprofessional Practice	4,329	3.78	Failure To Supervise	428	0.37
Failure To Comply with Requirements Impaired Nurse	4,318	3.77	Leaving Duty Station	423	0.37
Medication Errors	3,714	3.24	Theft - Employer	415	0.36
Felony	3,333	2.91	Physical Inability To Practice	399	0.35
Action Cleared	3,222	2.81	Inappropriate Delegation	369	0.32
Practicing Without License	3,150	2.75	Failure To Report Violations	340	0.30
False Documentation	3,123	2.73	Executing Inappropriate Orders	297	0.26
Other Drug Related	3,087	2.69	Sexual Misconduct - Boundaries	276	0.24
Alcohol Abuse	3,000	2.62	Theft - Client	259	0.23
Action In Another Jurisdiction	2,974	2.60	Fraud In Continuing Education	229	0.20
Misdemeanor	2,496	2.18	Adjudication - Chemically Dependent	205	0.18
Other Continuing Education	2,459	2.15	Other (APRN)	177	0.15
Unsafe Practice	2,344	2.05	Breach Of Confidentiality	174	0.15
Failure To Renew	1,950	1.70	Sale Of Drugs	159	0.14
Drug Use On Duty	1,750	1.53	Other Sexual Misconduct	149	0.13
Failure To Assess	1,712	1.49	Fraudulent Billing	141	0.12
Failure To Follow Orders	1,699	1.48	Mental Abuse	134	0.12
Incompetent Practice	1,543	1.35	Sexual Abuse	117	0.10
Fraud Obtaining License	1,421	1.24	Aiding Unlicensed Practice	114	0.10
Other Criminal Conviction	1,369	1.19	Practicing Beyond (APRN)	111	0.10
Practicing Beyond Scope	1,263	1.10	Sex With Client	80	0.07
Drug Related Conviction	1,231	1.07	Adjudication - Dangerous To Public	62	0.05
Other Misconduct	1,185	1.03	Rx Errors (APRN)	62	0.05
Failure To Intervene	1,134	0.99	Adjudication - Mentally Ill	61	0.05
Violating State/Federal Statute	1,120	0.98	Other Adjudication	50	0.04
Writing Illegal Rx	936	0.82	Fraud Obtaining Other Credential(s)	46	0.04
Presenting Illegal Rx	896	0.78	Tx Errors (APRN)	42	0.04
Reinstatement	874	0.76	Sexual Language	37	0.03
Wastage Errors	846	0.74	Dx Errors (APRN)	26	0.02
Other Fraud	842	0.73	Adjudication - Mentally Incompetent	24	0.02
Mental Inability To Practice Safely	834	0.73	Discrimination - Client	21	0.02
Conviction Against Person	832	0.73	Adjudication - Committed For Psychiatric Care	19	0.02
Neglect	764	0.67	Fraud Obtaining Degree/Diploma	15	0.01
TOTAL				114,570	99.98*

*Does not total 100.00 due to rounding error.

Table 10. Number of Violations Committed by a Nurse

Violations	Frequency	Percent
1	23,399	44.40
2	14,371	27.27
3	7,192	13.65
4	3,608	6.85
5	1,851	3.51
6	947	1.80
7	524	0.99
8	317	0.60
9	186	0.35
10	90	0.17
11	76	0.14
12	46	0.09
13	35	0.07
14	17	0.03
15	10	0.02
16	8	0.02
17	7	0.01
18	3	0.01
19	2	0.00
20	2	0.00
21	2	0.00
24	1	0.00
30	1	0.00

Table 11. Violations by Year and Type of License

Discipline Year	All and types							Total
	APRN	APRN and LPN/VN	APRN and RN	APRN, RN and LPN/VN	LPN/VN	RN	RN and LPN/VN	
1996	4	0	0	0	2,227	3,423	60	5,714
1997	9	0	0	0	2,725	4,240	353	7,327
1998	17	4	7	0	3,198	4,714	266	8,206
1999	23	0	24	0	3,211	5,230	216	8,704
2000	51	2	26	0	2,281	3,428	181	5,969
2001	110	6	28	12	2,376	4,219	211	6,962
2002	82	6	62	0	2,826	5,859	244	9,079
2003	76	6	68	6	3,608	7,057	305	11,126
2004	53	12	91	20	4,539	8,543	531	13,789
2005	25	5	77	0	5,186	8,506	842	14,641
2006	33	2	96	9	5,621	9,396	1,014	16,171
Total	483	43	479	47	37,798	64,615	4,223	107,688

ACTIONS

Of the 126,130 actions taken, 13% were probation, 13% were suspensions and 10% were fines. Reprimands represented 9% of the violations and revocations of licenses constituted 7% (Table 12).

Almost 28% of the disciplined nurses received probation for their violations; 26% received suspended licenses; 24% were fined; 20% were reprimanded; and 16% had their licenses revoked (Table 13).

Of the disciplined nurses, 55% had more than one action taken against their license (Table 14). The mean number of actions was 2.4 per disciplined nurse. The median was two actions per nurse and the most common number of actions was one.

The average age at the time of disciplinary action was 43. Again, age was restricted to those between 17 and 79 years of age.

The breakdown of actions by type of nurse is very similar to those of violations: 68% of the actions were attributed to RNs, 31% to LPN/VNs, and 2% to APRNs (Table 15).

Similar to violations, there has been a growth of the number of actions over the years (Figure 2).

Actions for the Same Violation

Data were analyzed to determine if there are similar actions taken for the same violation across jurisdictions. Table 16 indicates that BONs issued similar actions for certain violations. Table 16 is a partial list of the commonly used discipline actions for different violations across jurisdictions.

An attempt was also made to determine if there are certain clusters of actions that are taken for a particular violation. Table 17 is a list of the most common action(s) taken for a particular violation.

Table 12. Actions

Action	Frequency	Percent
Probation/Conditions	16,085	12.75
Suspension	15,924	12.63
Fine	13,295	10.54
Reprimand/Censure	10,916	8.65
Revocation	9,201	7.29
Action Cleared	7,941	6.30
Voluntary Surrender	7,826	6.20
Other Action	7,485	5.93
Other	5,125	4.06
Education	4,494	3.56
Drug Testing	3,785	3.00
Supervision	3,330	2.64
Reinstatement	2,922	2.32
Limited/Restricted	2,281	1.81
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)/Support	2,255	1.79
Counseling	1,807	1.43
Environment	1,283	1.02
Chemically Dependency Evaluation	1,278	1.01
Summary Suspension	1,230	0.98
Drug Access/Controlled Substances	1,203	0.95
License Denied	1,199	0.95
Treatment	1,155	0.92
Mental Health Evaluation	872	0.69
Area Practice	851	0.67
Reinstatement Denied	446	0.35
Hours/Shift	407	0.32
Medical Evaluation	238	0.19
Probation Rescinded	228	0.18
Consultation	214	0.17
License Renewal Denied	196	0.16
Modification Granted	182	0.14
Drug Access/Any	110	0.09
Type Clients	106	0.08
Modification Denied	84	0.07
Passing Medications	77	0.06
Retired For Medical Reasons	66	0.05
Restitution	33	0.03
TOTAL	126,130	99.98

Table 13. Type of Action

Action	# Nurses	Percent of Disciplined Nurses
Probation	14,718	28.00
Suspension	13,720	26.00
Fine	12,441	24.00
Reprimand	10,606	20.00
Revocation	8,605	16.00

Table 14. Disciplinary Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent	Actions	Frequency	Percent
1	23,898	45.35	16	35	0.07
2	13,437	25.50	17	22	0.04
3	6,038	11.46	18	19	0.04
4	3,194	6.06	19	19	0.04
5	1,894	3.59	20	14	0.03
6	1,248	2.37	21	4	0.01
7	1,057	2.01	22	5	0.01
8	604	1.15	23	8	0.02
9	401	0.76	24	2	0.00
10	264	0.50	25	2	0.00
11	180	0.34	26	1	0.00
12	136	0.26	27	1	0.00
13	102	0.19	28	2	0.00
14	64	0.12	30	1	0.00
15	42	0.08	34	1	0.00

Figure 2. Actions by Year

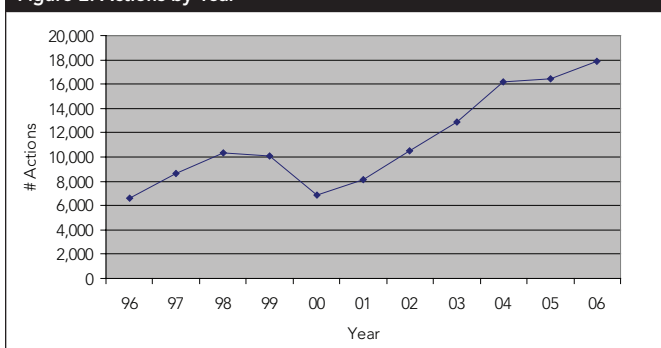


Table 15. Number of Actions by Year and Type of Nurse

Discipline Year	All and types							Total	Population in 2006	Percent of Population
	APRN	APRN and LPN/VN	APRN and RN	APRN, RN and LPN/VN	LPN/VN	RN	RN and LPN/VN			
1996	9	0	0	0	2,265	4,262	64	6,600	3,864,632	0.17
1997	19	0	0	0	2,703	5,462	454	8,638	3,875,444	0.22
1998	42	6	14	0	3,404	6,589	318	10,373	3,973,455	0.26
1999	42	0	19	0	3,168	6,524	301	10,054	4,009,234	0.25
2000	143	2	31	0	2,196	4,308	198	6,878	4,006,135	0.17
2001	328	4	44	10	2,392	5,100	254	8,132	3,979,931	0.20
2002	202	11	100	0	2,868	7,077	276	10,534	4,064,628	0.26
2003	183	9	121	8	3,728	8,526	317	12,892	4,096,015	0.31
2004	123	32	141	27	4,913	10,417	573	16,226	4,179,974	0.39
2005	68	7	96	0	5,032	10,417	821	16,441	4,240,325	0.39
2006	55	3	140	8	5,637	11,096	982	17,921	4,363,206	0.41
Total	1,214	74	706	53	38,306	79,778	4,558	124,689		

Table 16. Actions for the Same Violation

Violation Code Description	Action Code Description	# of Jurisdictions
Drug Abuse	Suspension	43
False Documentation	Suspension	42
Drug Diversion Self	Suspension	42
Other Unprofessional Practice	Suspension	41
Drug Abuse	Probation/Conditions	41
Drug Diversion Self	Probation/Conditions	41
Felony	Probation/Conditions	40
Medication Errors	Probation/Conditions	40
Other Unprofessional Practice	Reprimand/Censure	40
Other Unprofessional Practice	Probation/Conditions	40
False Documentation	Reprimand/Censure	40
Violating Board Order	Probation/Conditions	40
Violating Board Order	Suspension	40
Other	Probation/Conditions	40
Other	Suspension	40
Failure To Maintain Minimal Standards	Probation/Conditions	39
Documentation Errors	Probation/Conditions	39
Medication Errors	Suspension	39
False Documentation	Probation/Conditions	39
Drug Diversion Self	Revocation	39
Unsafe Practice	Probation/Conditions	38
Unsafe Practice	Suspension	38
Alcohol Abuse	Probation/Conditions	38
Alcohol Abuse	Suspension	38
Other Drug Related	Probation/Conditions	38
Action In Another Jurisdiction	Probation/Conditions	38
Action In Another Jurisdiction	Suspension	38
Failure To Maintain Minimal Standards	Reprimand/Censure	37
Failure To Maintain Minimal Standards	Suspension	37
Documentation Errors	Suspension	37
Practicing Beyond Scope	Probation/Conditions	37
Drug Abuse	Voluntary Surrender	37
Drug Abuse	Revocation	37
Fraud Obtaining License	Revocation	37
Practicing Without License	Reprimand/Censure	37

Table 17. Actions Taken for Violations

Violation	Action	Frequency	Violation	Action	Frequency
Action Code 7000: Action Cleared	Action Cleared	3,097	Other Inability To Practice Safely	Suspension	286
Drug Abuse	Probation/Conditions	2,652	Presenting Illegal Rx	Suspension	270
Violating Board Order	Suspension	2,463	Writing Illegal Rx	Suspension	261
Drug Diversion Self	Suspension	2,418	Mental Inability To Practice Safely	Suspension	248
Failure To Comply with Requirements Impaired Nurse	Suspension	2,161	Conviction Against Person	Revocation	247
Practicing Without License	Fine	2,063	Wastage Errors	Probation/Conditions	222
Failure To Maintain Minimal Standards	Probation/Conditions	1,891	Physical Abuse	Probation/Conditions	220
Other Continuing Education	Fine	1,784	Neglect	Reprimand/Censure	216
Failure To Renew	Fine	1,572	Failure To Supervise	Reprimand/Censure	187
Other Unprofessional Practice	Probation/Conditions	1,403	Other Fraud	Revocation	186
Other	Suspension	1,300	Verbal Abuse	Probation/Conditions	179
Documentation Errors	Probation/Conditions	1,262	Inappropriate Delegation	Reprimand/Censure	174
Medication Errors	Probation/Conditions	1,127	Conviction Against Property	Probation/Conditions	166
Alcohol Abuse	Probation/Conditions	1,034	Drug Diversion Others	Suspension	142
Other Drug Related	Probation/Conditions	1,013	Leaving Duty Station	Reprimand/Censure	139
Felony	Suspension	909	Fraud In Continuing Education	Reprimand/Censure	130
False Documentation	Probation/Conditions	811	Theft Employer	Suspension	124
Misdemeanor	Probation/Conditions	780	Physical Inability To Practice	Voluntary Surrender	120
Action In Another Jurisdiction	Revocation	726	Failure To Report Violations	Fine	119
Action Code 6000: Reinstatement	Reinstatement	714	Aiding Unlicensed Practice	Reprimand/Censure	91
Unsafe Practice	Probation/Conditions	648	Breach Of Confidentiality	Reprimand/Censure	84
Incompetent Practice	Probation/Conditions	618	Theft Client	Suspension	82
Practicing Beyond Scope	Reprimand/Censure	564	Other (APRN)	Reprimand/Censure	78
Failure To Assess	Reprimand/Censure	521	Executing Inappropriate Orders	Other Action	77
Action Code 5400: Voluntary Surrender	Voluntary Surrender	520	Sale Of Drugs	Suspension	75
Failure To Follow Orders	Probation/Conditions	509	Sexual Misconduct Boundaries	Probation/Conditions	69
Other Criminal Conviction	Probation/Conditions	473	Adjudication Chemically Dependent	Suspension	66
Drug Use On Duty	Probation/Conditions	451	Practicing Beyond (APRN)	Reprimand/Censure	49
Drug Related Conviction	Suspension	425	Sexual Abuse	Revocation	49
Violating State/Federal Statute	Suspension	420	Practicing Beyond (APRN)	Reprimand/Censure	49
Fraud Obtaining License	Reprimand/Censure	418	Sexual Abuse	Revocation	49
Other Misconduct	Reprimand/Censure	360	Other Sexual Misconduct	Revocation	46
Failure To Intervene	Reprimand/Censure	343			

INCIDENTS

There were 68,871 incidents (Table 18). An incident was defined as the number of different action dates that occurred in a nurse's record. For example, if there was a board action taken against a nurse on Jan. 2, 2003, Feb. 4, 2004, and March 30, 2005, the nurse was deemed to have had three separate incidents.

An incident can contain multiple violations. For example, a nurse could have made a medication error and then failed to document it. On March 30, 2005, the BON met and put the nurse on probation for having committed the two violations. So even though there were multiple violations they are counted as one incident. Over three-fourths of the disciplined nurses had only one incident. The average number of incidents per nurse was two.

Table 18. Number of Incidents Per Disciplined Nurse

Incidents	Frequency	Percent
1	40,610	77.07
2	9,170	17.40
3	2,092	3.97
4	586	1.11
5	158	0.30
6	55	0.10
7	16	0.03
8	4	0.01
9	3	0.01
10	1	0.00

RECIDIVISM

The average percentage of recidivism in a state was 21%, with a low of 0% to a high of 43%. Recidivism, in this case, is defined as a nurse with more than one incident.

CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

There were 7,076 nurses with a criminal violation. Criminal violations included felonies, misdemeanors, other criminal conviction, conviction against a person and conviction against property. Overall, there were 8,929 criminal violations, which represent 8.5% of all violations.

Those with a criminal violation committed a total of 16,657 criminal violations, representing 14.5% of all violations. Each nurse with a criminal violation averaged 2.35 violations. Disciplined nurses without a criminal violation averaged 1.98 violations.

EDUCATION

Of the disciplined nurses, 38% were educated in the state they were disciplined in. This percentage may be even higher since about 41% of the cases were missing education program information.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

There were 295 individuals identified as having been educated outside the U.S. (Table 19). This represents one-half of 1% of those disciplined. In terms of the number of violations, there were no statistically significant differences ($p < 0.9994$) between those who were educated outside the U.S. and those who were not.

Country	Frequency
Canada	69
Chile	3
China	4
France	1
Germany	4
Ghana	4
Great Britain	19
India	26
Iran	4
Ireland	3
Italy	1
Jamaica	4
Kenya	3
Korea	8
Liberia	2
Mexico	9
New Zealand	3
Nigeria	2
Peru	1
Philippines	85
Russia	3
South America	1
South Korea	2
Spain	2
Sweden	1
Taiwan	1
Thailand	2
Ukraine	2
Other	26
TOTAL	295

DRUG RELATED VIOLATIONS

Of all violations, 18% were drug related; 19% of these cases were actions taken against male nurses. Chemically dependent nurses usually work for several years before undergoing disciplinary action. Table 20 lists the most common actions for drug related violations.

Table 20. Actions Taken For Drug Related Violations

Action Code Description	Frequency	Percent
Probation/Conditions	28,137	12.91
Suspension	27,315	12.53
Fine	21,984	10.09
Revocation	17,493	8.03
Reprimand/Censure	16,892	7.75
Voluntary Surrender	14,893	6.83
Other Action	13,383	6.14
Action Cleared	11,604	5.32
Other	9,570	4.39
Education	7,522	3.45
Drug Testing	6,122	2.81
Supervision	5,872	2.69
Reinstatement	4,659	2.14
Limited/Restricted	4,501	2.07
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)/ Support	3,838	1.76
Counseling	2,922	1.34
Treatment	2,275	1.04
Environment	2,219	1.02
Summary Suspension	2,208	1.01
Drug Access/Controlled Substance	2,191	1.01
Chemical Dependency Evaluation	2,190	1.00
License Denied	2,007	0.92
Area Practice	1,648	0.76
Mental Health Evaluation	1,621	0.74
Reinstatement Denied	922	0.42
Hours/Shift	877	0.40
Consultation	592	0.27
Probation Rescinded	417	0.19
License Renewal Denied	416	0.19
Medical Evaluation	364	0.17
Modification Granted	287	0.13
Modification Denied	212	0.10
Drug Access/Any	208	0.10
Retired For Medical Reasons	189	0.09
Type Clients	187	0.09
Passing Medications	166	0.08
Restitution	54	0.02

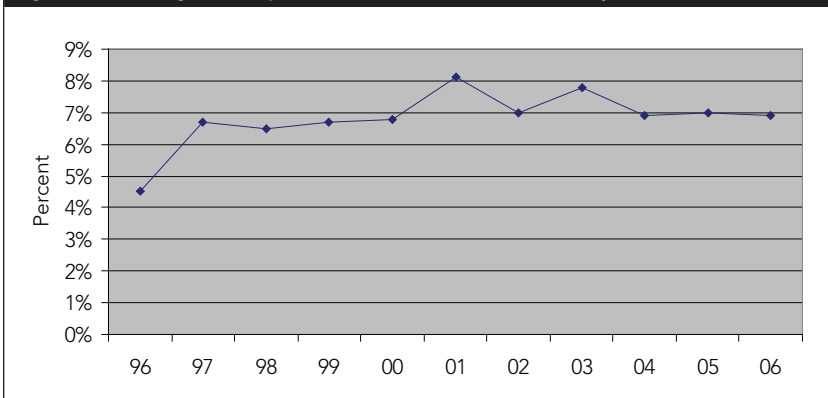
MEDICATION ERRORS

Table 21 lists the most common actions taken for medication errors. The percentage of nurses who are disciplined for a medication error has remained fairly uniform between 1996 and 2006, as exhibited in Figure 3.

Table 21. Actions Taken For Medication Errors Violation

Action	Frequency	Percent	Action	Frequency	Percent
Probation/Conditions	1,175	16.57	Hours/Shift	41	0.58
Reprimand/Censure	833	11.75	Counseling	38	0.54
Other Action	708	9.99	Chemical Dependency Evaluation	37	0.52
Education	622	8.77	Passing Medications	28	0.39
Suspension	576	8.12	Summary Suspension	27	0.38
Voluntary Surrender	508	7.17	Reinstatement Denied	24	0.34
Fine	435	6.14	Mental Health Evaluation	23	0.32
Other	416	5.87	Drug Access/Controlled Substance	22	0.31
Action Cleared	338	4.77	Treatment	17	0.24
Supervision	326	4.60	License Denied	14	0.20
Revocation	318	4.49	Drug Access/Any	10	0.14
Limited/Restricted	135	1.90	Probation Rescinded	8	0.11
Reinstatement	98	1.38	Medical Evaluation	5	0.07
Environment	77	1.09	License Renewal Denied	4	0.06
Drug Testing	71	1.00	Type Clients	4	0.06
Area Practice	53	0.75	Modification Granted	3	0.04
Consultation	50	0.71	Restitution	2	0.03
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)/Support	43	0.61	Retired For Medical Reasons	1	0.01

Figure 3. Percentage of Disciplined Nurses with Medication Error by Year



STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by inaccurate and incomplete data. Table 22 lists a number of variables that had significant amounts of missing data.

Regarding age at first licensure, 101 nurses had ages below zero and six were over the age of 100. Overall, there were 165 nurses listed as having obtained their first license at 60 years of age or older. There were 23 nurses who claimed to have obtained their first license before they were born, while 3,927 nurses apparently obtained their license on the day of their birth. There were also 5,708 nurses who were identified as having been disciplined before they obtained a license.

BONs should be encouraged to set up quality and consistency checks to clean up their data before it is submitted to Nursys.

Table 22. Missing Data

Variable	Frequency	Percent of All Disciplined Nurses
Date of Birth	1,404	3.00
Gender	3,587	7.00
Race/Ethnicity	23,751	45.00
Education Program	21,539	41.00
Age at Initial Licensure	11,934	23.00

CONCLUSIONS

This report analyzed disciplinary data reported by 44 BONs from 1996 through 2006. Some of the major findings of the study are:

- A very small percentage (less than 1%) are disciplined;
- LPN/VNs are more likely to be disciplined than RNs or APRNs;
- Males are disproportionately disciplined, especially among nurses with a chemical dependency problem;
- Almost 96% of disciplined nurses are not disciplined in more than one state;
- Discipline occurs less frequently among nurses with one year or less experience. About two-fifths (39%) have been licensed between 10 and 24 years;
- One-fifth (21%) of disciplined nurses recidivate;
- Nurses with a criminal violation had about the same number of violations as disciplined nurses without a criminal history;
- Drug related violations represent 25% of all violations; and
- Missing data make it difficult to draw any conclusions about the relationship between discipline and educational programs.

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