



OFFICE OF PROF. MICHAEL S. MOATES, Ed.D.

**LICENSED BEHAVIOR ANALYST | REGISTERED NATUROPATH
CERTIFIED EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROFESSIONAL**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CROSSPOINT HEALTH
DIRECTOR, AMERICAN COLLEGE OF NEURODIVERSITY PRACTITIONERS
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING CANDIDATE, HERZING UNIVERSITY
FELLOW, INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION, FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY
ADVOCACY LEADER, GRADUATE STUDENT NURSING ACADEMY**

**150 N. MCLEAN BOULEVARD, #147
WICHITA, KANSAS 67203
DOCMOATES@GMAIL.COM**

18 November 2025

Position Statement: LaCrista Vaughn, RN – Dallas Regional Medical Center

I am issuing this position statement to document serious concerns regarding abusive, retaliatory, and potentially unsafe conduct alleged to have occurred in connection with nursing care provided by LaCrista Vaughn, RN, at Dallas Regional Medical Center. I am calling for an immediate, impartial investigation grounded in federal law, Texas regulation, and nursing ethics. The conduct described is alleged to include verbal abuse, intimidation, and disregard for the dignity and psychological safety of both patients and staff. If these allegations are substantiated, such behavior would be fundamentally inconsistent with the obligations of a registered nurse practicing in Texas and with the trust that patients place in the nursing profession and in this facility.

As both a nursing student and a mental health professional, I am deeply concerned about the impact that abusive or hostile behavior can have on vulnerable patients, particularly those experiencing psychiatric symptoms, trauma, or significant medical stress. Patients in crisis often interpret tone of voice, facial expressions, and staff behavior through the lens of fear and past trauma, and exposure to verbal abuse or intimidation can worsen anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. It can also erode trust in the health care system as a whole. From my mental

health background, I know that repeated experiences of humiliation, ridicule, or invalidation in care settings can have lasting psychological consequences and may discourage patients from seeking future treatment when they most need help. As a nursing student who is learning to practice under high standards of compassion, safety, and ethics, it is deeply distressing to see allegations that any nurse, especially a preceptor or role model to students, might engage in conduct that undermines those standards.

Federal and state law require that both patients and staff be protected from abuse, harassment, and discrimination. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers may not permit unlawful harassment or discrimination in the workplace, including harassment that creates a hostile work environment based on a protected characteristic (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.). Hospitals that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement must also comply with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Conditions of Participation, which obligate facilities to promote and protect patient rights and to provide care in a safe setting that is free from abuse, neglect, or harassment (42 C.F.R. § 482.13; U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2024). Allegations of verbal abuse, threats, retaliation, or intentional disregard for patient dignity, if verified, would be inconsistent with these federal protections and with the duty of both the facility and its nursing staff to safeguard patient rights and staff wellbeing.

In Texas, nurses are governed by the Nursing Practice Act and the rules of the Texas Board of Nursing. The Nursing Practice Act authorizes the Board to impose discipline when a nurse engages in unprofessional conduct or fails to conform to minimum standards of acceptable nursing practice in a way that could expose a patient or other person unnecessarily to risk of harm (Tex. Occ. Code §§ 301.452, 301.4521; Texas Board of Nursing [TBON], 2024). Board Rule 217.11 requires every nurse to implement measures to promote a safe environment, to

respect the dignity and rights of all persons, and to refrain from behavior that is verbally, mentally, or physically abusive or exploitative toward patients or colleagues (22 Tex. Admin. Code § 217.11; TBON, 2024). Persistent intimidation, ridicule, retaliatory conduct, or neglect of patient needs, if substantiated, could be evaluated as violations of these standards and as unprofessional conduct subject to reporting and review by the Texas Board of Nursing.

Workplace safety and anti retaliation protections further underscore that staff who raise good faith concerns about abuse or unsafe care must be protected when they speak up. Federal occupational safety guidance emphasizes that strong anti retaliation programs are essential to encourage reporting of hazards, discrimination, or unsafe practices, and that employers should ensure that workers can report concerns without fear of discipline, schedule manipulation, harassment, or termination (Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA], 2020). In a hospital environment, efforts to punish, isolate, or silence staff who report abusive behavior by a nurse would conflict with these principles, undermine a culture of safety, and increase risk to patients and coworkers. As a nursing student, I also experience the power imbalance that can exist between students and licensed staff. Any culture that allows intimidation or retaliation not only harms current staff but also teaches the next generation of nurses that speaking up is dangerous, which directly conflicts with the safety culture we are taught in nursing education.

Ethically, the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics is clear that nurses must practice with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person and must protect the rights, health, and safety of patients (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015). The Code also calls on nurses to create and sustain an ethical environment of civility and kindness and to take action when they observe incompetent, unethical, illegal, or impaired practice (ANA, 2015). Alleged patterns of demeaning speech, intimidation, or retaliation by a nurse toward patients or colleagues are directly at odds with

these ethical duties. If the conduct alleged against LaCrista Vaughn, RN, is substantiated through a fair and thorough process, it would represent a serious breach of professional ethics and a failure to uphold the core values of the nursing profession.

On a personal level, as someone who has dedicated significant time to studying mental health and who is actively working toward becoming a nurse, I view this situation not only as a regulatory matter but as a profound ethical and human concern. Patients who present in crisis, pain, or psychological distress deserve to encounter nurses who are safe, compassionate, and trustworthy. Students and junior staff deserve role models who demonstrate integrity, emotional regulation, and respect under pressure. When a nurse allegedly behaves in ways that are abusive or retaliatory, the harm reverberates through the unit, the institution, and the community. It also stains the collective reputation of nurses who work hard every day to advocate for their patients and to advance the standards of our profession.

This position statement does not make final factual or legal determinations regarding any individual. Instead, it emphasizes that the conduct alleged, if proven, would be incompatible with governing federal law, with the Texas Nursing Practice Act and Board rules, with relevant hospital regulatory requirements, and with foundational nursing ethical standards. I respectfully call on Dallas Regional Medical Center leadership and, when appropriate, the Texas Board of Nursing to conduct a prompt, impartial, and well documented investigation, to protect all reporters and witnesses from retaliation, and to implement corrective actions that are sufficient to protect patients, support staff and students, uphold professional integrity, and make clear that abuse and retaliation have no place within nursing practice in Texas or anywhere else.

References

American Nurses Association. (2015). Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements.

American Nurses Association.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (2020). Recommended practices for anti-retaliation programs. U.S. Department of Labor.

Texas Board of Nursing. (2024). Nursing practice act and board rules and regulations. Texas Board of Nursing.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (n.d.). Prohibited employment policies/practices. EEOC.

U.S. Government Publishing Office. (2024). Code of Federal Regulations, Title 42, § 482.13: Condition of participation: Patient's rights. U.S. Government Publishing Office.