

Scope of Nursing Practice Decision-Making Framework

Introduction

In early 2015, the Tri-Council for Nursing, consisting of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) and the National League for Nursing (NLN), in collaboration with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN®), determined that a uniform tool (scope of practice decision-tree) was needed. The tool would be adopted by boards of nursing (BONs), used by facilities, and help a nurse determine whether specific activities, interventions or roles are permitted under the nurse's level of education, licensure and competence; and meet the standards established by the Nurse Practice Act and rules/regulations of each state/jurisdiction.

Representatives from the ANA, NLN, BONs, along with NCSBN staff methodically reviewed the literature and existing decision-making algorithms and used their expertise to develop a uniform tool that could be used across states/jurisdictions.

Purpose

Recognizing that nursing practice is continually evolving, this document serves to provide a standardized, decision-making framework for all licensed nurses in all settings with respect to their education, role, function and accountability within the scope of nursing practice. It will assist nurses, including direct care nurses, in navigating current nursing practice with all of its challenges. As practice transforms, licensed nurses need to communicate any ongoing issues/concerns to their BON so regulators can evaluate whether changes to the Nurse Practice Act, rules/regulations, or standards need to be considered.

Targeted Population

All licensed nurses (LPN/VN, RN and APRN) at all experience levels (novice to expert), in all practice settings, and in all roles such as:

- Direct care nurses
- Nurse managers
- Nurse administrators
- Nurse educators
- Nurse researchers
- Nurse regulators
- Nurse policymakers

Context for Use

To promote safety of patients, nurses would use this framework to:

- Determine individual accountability for practice decisions;
- Communicate with other health care professionals regarding the scope of nursing practice and the nurse's accountability;
- Inform health care and other employing organizations about the scope of nursing practice and nursing accountability;
- Educate nursing students about their accountability for practice decisions; and
- Guide professional nursing organizations, credentialing and regulatory agencies in the formulation of scope and standards of practice, policy and position statements.

Key Definitions

Accountability: “To be answerable to oneself and others for one’s own choices, decisions and actions as measured against a standard such as that established by the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements.” (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015a, page 41)

“To be accountable, nurses follow a code of ethical conduct that includes moral principles such as fidelity, loyalty, veracity, beneficence, and respect for the dignity, worth, and self-determination of patients, as well as adhering to the scope and standards of nursing practice. Nurses in all roles are accountable for decisions made and actions taken in the course of nursing practice. Systems and technologies that assist in clinical practice are adjunct to, not replacements for, the nurse’s knowledge and skill. Therefore, nurses are accountable for their practice even in instances of system or technology failure.” (ANA, 2015a, page 15-16)

Appropriate resources: Human and material support to perform the activity, intervention or role safely, including any necessary emergency management.

Education: Refers to basic nursing education, advanced nursing education or professional development to support in the activity, intervention or role

Professional nursing standards: A set of standards for the practice of safe and effective nursing care such as *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Third Edition* (ANA, 2015b) and [*Nursing Practice Standards for the Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse*](#) (National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, 2003).

Reasonable and prudent nurse: A nurse that uses good judgment in providing nursing care according to accepted standards and that another nurse with similar education and experience in similar circumstances would provide.

References

American Nurses Association. (2015a). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*. Silver Spring, Maryland: Author.

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National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses. (2003). *NFLPN Practice Standards for the Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse*.

Advisory Panel

Karen Ballard, MA, RN, FAAN
Deb Haagenson, BSN, RN
Linda Christiansen, EdD, JD, MSN, RN
Gloria Damgaard, MS, RN, FRE
Judith A. Halstead, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANEF
Ruby R. Jason, MSN, RN, NEA-BC
Jane Clare Joyner, MSN, RN, JD
Ann M. O'Sullivan, MSN, RN, CNE, NE-BC, ANEF
Josephine Silvestre, MSN, RN
Maureen Cahill, MSN, RN, APN-CNS
Beth Radtke, MS
Maryann Alexander, PhD, RN, FAAN


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 **NCSBN**
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
111 E. Wacker Drive, Ste. 2900
Chicago, IL 60601


Main 312.525.3600
Fax 312.279.1032
www.ncsbn.org

 **ANA**
AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION
8515 Georgia Ave., Ste. 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Main 1.800.274.4ANA
www.nursingworld.org


 **American Association
of Colleges of Nursing**
One Dupont Circle, NW Suite 530
Washington, DC 20036

Main 202.463.6930
Fax 202.785.8320
www.aacn.org

 **AONE**
The Voice of Nursing Leadership™
155 N. Wacker Drive, Ste. 400
Chicago, IL 60606

Executive Office:
800 10th Street, NW, Two City Center
Ste. 400, Washington, D.C.

Phone 312.422.2800 | 202.626.2240
Fax 312.422.4503 | 202.638.5499
www.aone.org

 **National League
for Nursing**
2600 Virginia Avenue, NW
Eight Floor
Washington, D.C. 20037

Phone 800.669.1656
www.nln.org