

Vermont State Board of Nursing
Determining Scope of Practice
Position Statement and Decision Tree

Question:

How does an APRN, RN or LPN in Vermont determine whether a specified activity is within their scope of practice?

Definitions:

Scope of practice: A nurse's scope of practice includes all the nursing activities that the nurse may perform while practicing as an APRN, RN or LPN.

Nursing activities: Nursing activities include tasks, procedures, and processes. (For example, RN activities include assessment, planning, and evaluating the outcomes of care).

"Registered nursing" means the practice of nursing which includes but is not limited to:

- A. Assessing the health status of individuals and groups.
- B. Establishing a nursing diagnosis.
- C. Establishing goals to meet identified health care needs.
- D. Planning a strategy of medical or health care.
- E. Prescribing nursing interventions to implement the strategy of care.
- F. Implementing the strategy of care.
- G. Delegating nursing interventions that may be performed by others and that do not conflict with this subchapter. (Title 26 V.S.A., §1572)
- H. Maintaining safe and effective nursing care rendered directly or indirectly.
- I. Evaluating responses to interventions.
- J. Teaching the theory and practice of nursing.
- K. Managing and supervising the practice of nursing.
- L. Collaborating with other health professionals in the management of health care.
- M. Performance of such additional acts requiring education and training and which are recognized jointly by the medical and nursing professions as proper to be performed by registered nurses.

"Licensed practical nursing" means a directed scope of nursing practice which includes, but is not limited to:

- (i) Contributing to the assessment of the health status of individuals and groups.
- (ii) Participating in the development and modification of the strategy of care.
- (iii) Implementing the appropriate aspects of the strategy of care as defined by the board.
- (iv) Maintaining safe and effective nursing care rendered directly or indirectly.
- (v) Participating in the evaluation of responses to interventions.
- (vi) Delegating nursing interventions that may be performed by others and that do not conflict with this chapter.

A licensed practical nurse functions at the direction of a registered nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, licensed physician or licensed dentist in the performance of activities delegated by that health care professional.

"Advanced practice registered nurse" means a licensed registered nurse authorized to practice in this state who, because of specialized education and experience is endorsed to perform acts of medical diagnosis and to prescribe medical, therapeutic or corrective measures under administrative rules adopted by the board.

Background:

The legal basis for the scope of nursing in Vermont is the Vermont Nurse Practice Act (Title 26, Chapter 28 of the Vermont Statutes). An activity must be consistent with the Nurse Practice Act in order to be within the scope of practice of a APRN, RN or LPN.

Nursing practice evolves continuously in response to developments in technology, scientific knowledge, nursing education and training, and patient care needs. Activities within the scope of practice for APRNs, RNs and LPNs are described and differentiated by license type in the professional literature of nursing. For example, specific nursing practice activities are outlined in standards of practice, standards of care, and practice guidelines that may be found in journal articles, research reports, textbooks, and other resources.

Within the parameters outlined by the Vermont Nurse Practice Act, the individual scope of practice for each APRN, RN and LPN is determined by the individual's education, training, experience, and certification. The individual licensee's scope of practice is supported by documented evidence of education and competence in performing nursing activities. Other factors determining scope of practice include practice setting and population served; the availability of appropriate equipment, supervision and support; and policies, procedures, guidelines, or other resources for performing an activity.

Each APRN, RN and LPN has a responsibility to practice in a manner that protects and promotes the health, safety and rights of the patient. Each nursing activity must be consistent with reasonable and prudent practice. The nurse must be prepared to accept and manage the consequences of nursing activities. Each individual is accountable for his or her own practice.

Position Statement which Reflects Nurse's Roles and Responsibilities:

Every APRN, RN, and LPN is accountable, both professionally and legally, for determining and practicing within his or her individual scope of practice within the broader scope of practice of the licensure level of the nurse.

A nurse may not perform activities which exceed the scope defined by the individual level of licensure. This means that a nurse may not perform, even if directed to do so, an activity not recognized by the profession as appropriate for that level of licensure or otherwise prohibited by law.

The purpose of the Scope of Practice Decision Tree is to assist nurses, employers, and the public to determine whether an activity is within the scope of practice of a APRN, RN or LPN. The decision tree is meant to be used as a guide or self help tool and does not constitute a legal opinion. Other resources to assist in determining scope of practice include the Vermont Nurse Practice Act, Vermont Board of Nursing Position Statements (available on the Board of Nursing website), and consultation with the Executive Director of the Vermont Board of Nursing.

References/Citations:

American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, 2001

American Nurses Association Standards of Nursing practice

Colorado Board of Nursing Scope of Practice

Kentucky Board of Nursing Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines

New Jersey Board of Nursing Seven Step Decision Making Model: Algorithm for Determining Scope of Nursing Practice

Oregon State Board of Nursing Scope-of-Practice Decision-Making Guideline for RN and LPN Practice

Wisconsin Board of Nursing Scope of Practice Decision Tree: Guidelines for RN and LPN Practice

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Vermont Board of Nursing Decision Tree – Scope of Practice

