

# Vermont Board Of Nursing

## Role of the Nurse in Holistic Health Position Statement

**Question:** Is it within the scope of practice of an RN in Vermont to employ holistic modalities and therapies in nursing practice?

### Definition(s)

*Holistic perspective:* The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines it as one that "considers the whole person, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects".

*Holistic Nursing:* defined as "all nursing practice that has healing the whole person as its goal" (American Holistic Nurses' Association, 1998, Description of Holistic Nursing). Holistic nursing is a specialty practice that draws on nursing knowledge, theories, expertise and intuition to guide nurses in becoming therapeutic partners with people in their care. This practice recognizes the totality of the human being - the interconnectedness of body, mind, emotion, spirit, social/cultural, relationship, context, and environment.

### Background

In December of 2006, Holistic Nursing was officially recognized by the [American Nurses Association](#) (ANA) as a nursing specialty with a defined scope and standards of practice, acknowledging holistic nursing's unique contribution to the health and healing of people and society.

Examples of holistic modalities and therapies include massage, therapeutic touch, Reiki, reflexology/acupressure, imagery, art, dance, music therapy, aromatherapy, shiatsu, biofeedback, meditation, diet and nutrition (for the purpose of this advisory, the use of herbal medicines is not included in the modalities considered).

### Position Statement which Reflects Nurse's Roles and Responsibilities

It is within the scope of practice of an RN (as defined by Vermont Statute - VSA §1572 (2)) to employ holistic modalities and therapies in nursing practice by using a holistic approach to assess and evaluate the health status of an individual, to implement measures to relieve pain, promote comfort and relaxation, improve coping mechanisms, reduce stress and increase an individual's sense of well being. An LPN may employ these modalities based on an assessment and plan developed by an RN.

Nurses who utilize holistic modalities and therapies should:

- 1) demonstrate appropriate education that emanates from a recognized body of knowledge
- 2) demonstrate adequate skill in applying the modality/therapy.
- 3) obtain informed consent from the client.

Please refer to the Scope and Standards of Practice of Holistic Nursing for further guidance.

### References/Citations

American Holistic Nurses Association – [www.ahna.org](http://www.ahna.org)

ANA and AHNA – Holistic Nursing: Scope and Standards of Holistic Nursing – nursebooks.org - 2007

Date of Initial acceptance **November 1998**

Revised (Date) June 2010

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Reviewed (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

**This opinion is subject to change as changes in nursing practice occur.**