

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF NURSING

THE ROLE OF THE REGISTERED NURSE AS FIRST ASSISTANT POSITION STATEMENT

Question: Is the role of the Registered Nurse First Assistant (RNFA) within the scope of a Registered Nurse?

Definitions:

According to Association of Operating Room Nurses (AORN) (2010) the RNFA is a perioperative registered nurse who:

- works in collaboration with the surgeon and other health care team members to achieve optimal patient outcomes,
- has acquired the necessary knowledge, judgment, and skills specific to the *expanded role of RNFA clinical practice*,
- intra-operatively practices at the direction of the surgeon, and
- does **not** concurrently function as a scrub person

Background:

Perioperative nursing practice includes the role of RN First Assistant. First assisting is an intra-operative skill as well as a delegated medical function. The first assistant must be able to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate patient care, as well as, perform specific intra-operative skills such as:

- using instruments and medical devices
- providing surgical site exposure
- handling and/or cutting tissue
- providing hemostasis
- suturing

Position Statement which Reflects Nurse's Roles and Responsibilities:

The role of the RN First Assistant is within the scope of practice of the RN provided:

1. the RN has obtained certification in perioperative nursing (Certified Nurse Operating Room (CNOR)),
2. the RN has successfully completed an RNFA program that meets the "AORN standards for RNFA education programs",
3. the RN has demonstrated adequate knowledge and skill in performing the role,
4. the RN has demonstrated continuing competency in performing the role,
5. the agency/facility has established policies and procedures regarding the role of first assistant, and
6. guidelines for emergency situations are well established

In addition, the Board recommends that all education and training including evidence of initial and continuing competence be documented in the nurses personnel file and other criteria be so noted in institution files or policy manuals.

References/Citations:

RN First Assistant - AORN Position Statement – March 2010
AORN Standards for RN First Assistant Education Programs. In: *Perioperative Standards and Recommended Practices*, Denver, CO: AORN; 2009:692-694.

Date of Initial acceptance: October 1998

Revised: May 2011

Revised:

Reviewed:

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