

Nursing Assessment and Pronouncement of Death

In Oregon, death is "pronounced" when a person discovers a body and determines that the person is, in fact, deceased. Anyone may pronounce death in Oregon. Therefore, it is the Board's position that it is within the scope of practice of all licensed nurses (Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses) to pronounce death. It is appropriate for licensed nurses to make a nursing assessment of death (absence of vital signs of life), to record this assessment in the patient's chart and inform other health care providers of the patient's death.

The licensed nurse must comply with reporting and recording requirements of the health care facility and relevant state laws, specifically but not limited to ORS 146.100 (4), cases that may require an investigation by the medical examiner, and ORS 97.951 to 97.982, cases involving potential donors under the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act.

Adopted: January 1992

Amended: November 18, 1994

Amended: February 12, 2009

The Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) is authorized by Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 678 to exercise general supervision over the practice of nursing in Oregon to include regulation of nursing licensure, education and practice in order to assure that the citizens of Oregon receive safe and effective care.

The OSBN further interprets statute and rule and issues opinions in the form of Board Policies, Policy Guidelines and Position Statements. Although they do not have the force and effect of law, these opinions are advisory in nature and issued as guidelines for safe nursing practice.