Scope of Practice Decision Making Guidelines for All Licensed Nurses

Statement of Purpose
Recognizing that nursing practice changes and evolves in response to the health care needs of society, advancement in technologies, and the expansion of scientific and nursing knowledge, this document serves to provide scope of practice decision making guidelines that are applicable to the practice of the licensed practical nurse (LPN), the registered nurse (RN), and the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), with respect to nursing practice role, function, and one’s accountability for nursing practice decisions.

Background/Significance
The Chapter 678 statutes and Chapter 851 administrative rules that comprise Oregon’s Nurse Practice Act (NPA) are written broadly and codify a licensee’s scope of practice for each nursing licensure category.

Board Statement
While the scope of practice for each licensure category includes all of the activities in which the licensee may engage at his/her level of licensure, it does not include a list of specific procedures or tasks in which nurses may or may not engage.

Within the broader scope of practice written in the NPA, the individual scope of practice of each individual licensee will vary according to the licensee’s practice experiences, professional development activities, and demonstrated competencies. Each licensed nurse is responsible for determining his/her individual scope of practice that falls within the broader scope of practice set forth in the NPA.

There is no authority for a licensee, another health professional, an employer, or an organization to include activities for the licensee which exceed the broader scope of practice written in the NPA for each nursing licensure category.

Application of the following decision-making guidelines will help the licensee evaluate whether or not a specific practice role, intervention, or activity is within the scope of practice for the licensee’s level of licensure, appropriate to occur in the practice setting, and commensurate with the licensee’s demonstrated competencies.
Scope of Nursing Practice Decision-Making Framework

Identify, describe, or clarify the role, intervention, or activity under consideration.

Is the role, intervention or activity prohibited by the Nurse Practice Act and Rule(s)/Regulations or any other applicable laws, rules/regulations or accreditation standards?

YES STOP

NO

Is performing the role, intervention or activity consistent with professional nursing standards, evidence-based nursing and health care literature?

NO STOP

YES

Are there practice setting policies and procedures in place to support performing the role, intervention or activity?

NO STOP

YES

Has the nurse completed the necessary education to safely perform the role, intervention or activity?

NO STOP

YES

Is there documented evidence of the nurse’s current competence (knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgments) to safely perform the role, intervention or activity?

NO STOP

YES

Would a reasonable and prudent nurse perform the role, intervention or activity in this setting?

NO STOP

YES

Is the nurse prepared to accept accountability for the role, intervention or activity for the related outcomes?

NO STOP

YES

Nurse may perform the role, intervention or activity to acceptable and prevailing standards of safe nursing care.


Oregon Secretary of State (2017, August 1). Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 851 Division 45: Standards and Scope of Practice for the Licensed Practical Nurse and Registered Nurse.


Sermchief v. Gonzales, 660 S.W.2d 683 (1983), No. 64692 (Supreme Court of Missouri, En Banc).


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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 policies and interpretive statements, which are advisory in nature and issued as guidelines for safe nursing practice.