



# **Scope of Practice** **Decision Tree\***

\*Adopted by permission of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing

## **1. Describe the act to be performed. Review the scope of practice for your licensure level:**

### **RN**

assessment, nursing diagnosis, setting goals, planning care strategies, implementing care, delegating care to qualified others, supervising, evaluating, teaching, managing care, maintaining client safety, collaborating with other health care members.

### **LPN**

contributing to assessment, participating in development of plan of care, implementing aspects of care as directed, maintaining client safety, participating in evaluating care, and delegating care to qualified others.

### **ARNP**

assessing clients, synthesizing and analyzing data, understanding and applying nursing principals at an advanced level; providing expert teaching and guidance; working effectively with clients, families and other member of the health care team; managing clients' physical and psycho-social health-illness status; utilizing research skills; analyzing multiple sources of data, identifying alternative possibilities as to the nature of a health care problem, and selecting appropriate treatment; making independent decisions in solving complex client care problems; performing acts of diagnosing, prescribing, administering and dispensing therapeutic measures; and recognizing limits of knowledge and experience, planning for situations beyond expertise, consulting with or referring to other health care providers as appropriate.

**Is the act expressly permitted or prohibited by the Nurse Practice Act for the license you hold?**

**UNSURE**

**WITHIN SCOPE FOR  
YOUR LICENSE**

**PROHIBITED**



**Go to #2**



**Go to # 3**



**STOP**

**2. Is the act consistent with at least one of the following standards?**

- Nursing Commission standards of practice
- National nursing organization standards of practice
- Nursing literature and research
- Reasonable, prudent nurse in similar circumstances

**YES**

**NO**

**STOP**



**Go to #3**



**NOT WITHIN THE SCOPE  
OF PRACTICE**

**3. Do you personally possess the depth and breadth of knowledge to perform the act safely and effectively, as acquired in a pre-licensure program, post-basic program, continuing education program or structured self-study?**

**YES**

**NO**

**STOP**



Go to #4



UNTIL ADDITIONAL  
KNOWLEDGE GAINED

4. Do you personally possess current clinical skills to perform the act safely?

YES

NO

**STOP**



Go to #5



UNTIL CLINICAL SKILLS  
ARE ATTAINED

5. Is the performance of the act within the accepted "standard of care" which would be provided in similar circumstances by reasonable and prudent nurses who have similar training and experience and consistent with appropriately established facility/agency policies and procedures?

YES

NO

**STOP**



Go to #6



PERFORMANCE OF ACT  
MAY PLACE BOTH  
PATIENT/CLIENT AND  
NURSE AT RISK!

## 6. Are you prepared to accept the consequences of your action?

YES



NO



# STOP

**THE ACCOUNTABILITY  
IS NOT ASSUMED!  
NOTIFY APPROPRIATE  
PERSON(S)**

### **PERFORM THE ACT\***

**\*With valid order when necessary, and in  
accordance with agency policies and  
procedures**

### **Advisory Opinions**

Thank you for contacting the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission regarding nursing practice. The Nursing Commission is the agency responsible for licensure of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and advanced registered nurse practitioners for Washington state.

Commission members as well as the Department of Health staff members who carry out the work of the Commission are not able to answer specific clinical scope of practice questions either on the telephone, via e-mail, or in writing. However, several resources have been developed and approved by the Commission to assist individual nurses to analyze and review their own questions. Staff at the Commission office are available to listen to your questions so that appropriate materials can be supplied as you decide how best to proceed with your particular clinical situation.

Resources currently available are:

- Scope of Practice Decision Making Tree
- The Law Relating to Nursing (often referred to as the “Nurse Practice Act”)
- Advisory opinions issued by the Commission which may be applicable to your issue
- Position statements issued by the Commission

Please note that the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission is a regulatory agency of the State of Washington. A large variety of professional nursing associations and health care organizations are active in this state and may be able to advise you about current practice. Additionally, many nurses have been assisted with practice questions after researching current nursing literature, by reviewing employee

standard procedure manuals, and by consulting with their own organization's staff education offices.

If you feel you still need a response to your question, please contact the Commission office for a written advisory opinion request. Once the office has received your written request, the practice committee of the Commission will evaluate the request to determine whether or not the Commission will consider issuing a written advisory opinion.