KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING
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ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT

# THE PERFORMANCE OF ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT PROCEDURES BY NURSES

## Introduction

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 314 to regulate nurses, nursing education and practice, and to issue advisory opinions on nursing practice, in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Board of Nursing issues advisory opinions as to what constitutes safe nursing practice. As such, an opinion is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law. It is issued as a guidepost to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice.

## Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses

KRS 314.021(2) holds nurses individually responsible and accountable for rendering safe, effective nursing care to clients and for judgments exercised and actions taken in the course of providing care.

KRS 314.021(2) imposes individual responsibility upon nurses. Acts which are within the permissible scope of practice for a given licensure level may be performed only by those licensees who personally possess the education and skill proficiency to perform those acts in a safe, effective manner.

Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

## Statutes

KRS 314.011(6) defines "registered nursing practice" as:

> ...The performance of acts requiring substantial specialized knowledge, judgment, and nursing skill based upon the principles of psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences in the application of the nursing process in:
>
> a) The care, counsel, and health teaching of the ill, injured or infirm.
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> b) The maintenance of health or prevention of illness of others.
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> c) The administration of medication and treatment as prescribed by physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced registered nurse practitioner and as further authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses'-Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses. Components of medication administration include, but are not limited to:

1. Preparing and giving medication in the prescribed dosage, route, and frequency; including dispensing medications only as defined in subsection (17(b) of this section;
2. Observing, recording, and reporting desired effects, untoward reactions, and side effects of drug therapy;
3. Intervening when emergency care is required as a result of drug therapy;
4. Recognizing accepted prescribing limits and reporting deviations to the prescribing individual;
5. Recognizing drug incompatibilities and reporting interactions or potential interactions to the prescribing individual; and
6. Instructing an individual regarding medications.

d) The supervision, teaching of, and delegation to other personnel in the performance of activities relating to nursing care; and

e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses.

KRS 314.011(10) defines "licensed practical nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring knowledge and skill such as are taught or acquired in approved schools for practical nursing in:

a) The observing and caring for the ill, injured, or infirm under the direction of a registered nurse, a licensed physician, or dentist;

b) The giving of counsel and applying procedures to safeguard life and health, as defined and authorized by the board;

c) The administration of medication or treatment as authorized by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced registered nurse practitioner and as further authorized or limited by the board which is consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses;

d) Teaching, supervising, and delegating except as limited by the board; and

e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the Nurses' Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.

## Advisory Opinion

Numerous inquiries regarding the role of the registered nurse in the performance of advanced life support procedures for patients who have life threatening conditions or for patients who are in emergency situations have been received by the Kentucky Board of Nursing. After study of the issues and concerns regarding the performance of advanced life support procedures, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following advisory opinions:

Registered nurses who perform advanced life support procedures[1] for patients with life threatening conditions or for patients in emergency situations are responsible for having adequate preparation and experience to perform such acts as required by KRS 314.021(2). The registered nurse should have documented evidence of completion of continuing education, which provides for clinical practice and demonstration of competency in the performance of

[1] Advanced life support procedures may include but are not limited to:
- endothracheal intubation
- cricothyrotomy
- defibrillation
- chest tube placement
- umbilical arterial catheterization
- peripheral IV placement-external jugular vein site

such procedures. It is the responsibility of the nurse to maintain documented evidence of educational preparation and demonstrated continuing competency in the performance of the procedures.

In the performance of advanced life support procedures for patients with life threatening conditions or for patients who are in emergency situations, the registered nurse should:

1) Be knowledgeable of the potential complications and adverse reactions which may result from the procedure(s);

2) Possess the knowledge and ability to recognize adverse reactions and to take appropriate nursing intervention as needed;

3) Perform the procedure(s) in accordance with the established written agency policies and procedures, which are consistent with the definition of "registered nursing practice" as stated in KRS 314.011(6);

4) Act in accordance with the scopes and standards of practice promulgated by the national nursing organization appropriates to the area of practice of the registered nurse.

## Role of ARNP and LPN

In the performance of advanced life support procedures, the registered nurse is not authorized to engage in advanced registered nursing practice as defined in KRS 314.011(8). The advanced registered nurse practitioner may independently initiate advanced life support procedures, while the registered nurse initiates the procedures using established guidelines. The licensed practical nurse may assist others in the performance of advanced life support procedures and provide basic life support procedures; however, the performance of advanced life support procedures is not within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice.

## Determining Scope of Practice

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses individually responsible and accountable for the individual's acts based upon the nurse's education and experience. Each nurse must exercise professional and prudent judgment in determining whether the performance of a given act is within the scope of practice for which the nurse is both licensed and clinically competent to perform. In addition to this advisory opinion statement, the Kentucky Board of Nursing has published "Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines" which contains a decision tree chart providing guidance to nurses in determining whether a selected act is within an individual nurse's scope of practice now or in the future. A copy of the guidelines may be purchased from the Board office or downloaded from the KBN website at http://kbn.ky.gov.

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