



**KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING**  
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**ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT**

**ROLES OF NURSES AND TECHNICIANS IN DIALYSIS**

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 314 to regulate nurses, nursing education and practice, promulgate regulations 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 guideline to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice, and to facilitate the delivery of safe, effective nursing care to the public.

**Opinion:** Roles of Nurses and Technicians in Dialysis

**Approved Date:** 4/1990

**Revised:** 1/1993; 4/1995; 12/1999;  
4/2002; 2/2005; 12/2011; 12/2012

**Editorial Revision:** 1/2011; 5/2012

**Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses**

In accordance with KRS 314.021(2), nurses are responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and current clinical competence in nursing, and requires licensees to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety. Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

**Rationale for Advisory Opinion**

In response to the multiple inquiries on the role and scope of practice of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and dialysis technicians in the performance of dialysis, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued this advisory opinion statement.

### Advisory Opinion

After review of the statutes and administrative regulations governing registered nursing practice, licensed practical nursing practice, and dialysis technician practice, and study of the issues and concerns regarding the performance of dialysis, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following opinion.

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

### Registered Nurse Role

The performance of peritoneal and hemodialysis is within the scope of registered nursing practice for registered nurses who have obtained substantial specialized knowledge and skill in the performance of the procedures.

Based upon the statutes governing registered nursing practice, the registered nurse is responsible and accountable for:

1. Applying substantial specialized knowledge, judgement, and nursing skill in the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of nursing care for patients receiving dialysis;
2. Clinical decision making regarding nursing care, and assuring that care is provided in a safe and competent manner;
3. Assessing the dialysis patient according to medically approved written policy and procedure/protocol of the facility (as described below, components of assessment data collection may be delegated to others);
4. Maintaining documentation of one's educational preparation and demonstrated clinical competency;
5. Following policies and procedures of the facility that are consistent with KRS Chapter 314, and with statutes and regulations governing the operations and services of the dialysis facility; and
6. Providing direct, on-site supervision of licensed practical nurses and dialysis technicians who perform dialysis procedures. In a supervisory capacity, the registered nurse should provide direction and assistance to those supervised, observe and monitor the activities of those supervised, and evaluate the effectiveness of tasks performed under supervision.

In addition, it is the opinion of the Board that the following acts are within the scope of registered nursing practice and are **not** within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice or dialysis technician practice:

1. The dialysis of acutely ill unstable patients;
2. The connection and disconnection of patients from, and site care of, percutaneously or surgically inserted non-tunneled, non-implanted central venous catheters; and
3. The administration of medication via a direct intravenous route (i.e. push, bolus), and the administration of blood and blood products, except as permitted 201 KAR 20:490 LPN Intravenous Therapy Scope of Practice; and

### **Licensed Practical Nurse Role**

In select situations, a registered nurse may delegate the performance of peritoneal and hemodialysis to a licensed practical nurse who is educationally prepared and clinically competent in the performance of the procedures. In addition, the board has clarified that upon registered nurse delegation and direct, on-site supervision, the licensed practical nurse may:

1. Assist with the collection of assessment data;
2. Cannulate and perform dialysis treatment via an implanted subcutaneous vascular device (such as a "Lifesite" port), or a tunneled access device (such as a "Tesio" catheter), or peripheral access site (AV fistulas and AV grafts);
3. Administer intravenous therapy/medications according to 201 KAR 20:490 LPN Intravenous Therapy Scope of Practice and may administer other medications that are within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice; and
4. Obtain/draw blood specimens from dialysis tubing connected to central line dialysis sites.

### **Dialysis Technician Role**

As stated in Section (5) of 201 KAR 20:470 the scope of practice of the dialysis technician is performed under the direct, onsite supervision of a registered nurse or a physician.

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### **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 RN and LPN guidelines may be downloaded from the Board's website <http://kbn.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/74A5FF75-543D-4E12-8839-720B7623DA87/0/ScopeDeterminGuidelines.pdf> and a copy of the APRN guidelines may be downloaded from the Board's website <http://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/APRN%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20%20Decision%20Making%20Model.pdf>

**Applicable Statutes From the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*<sup>1</sup>**

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and experience in nursing.

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.
- b) The maintenance of health or prevention of illness of others.
- c) The administration of medication and treatment as prescribed by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced practice registered nurse 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;
  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.
- 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 practice registered nurse 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.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the *Kentucky Nursing Laws* may be downloaded from the Kentucky Board of Nursing website at <http://kbn.ky.gov>.

- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board and which are consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses' Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.

KRS 314.011(19) defines "dialysis technician" as:

... A person who is not a nurse, a physician assistant, or a physician and who provides dialysis care in a licensed renal dialysis facility under the direct, on-site supervision of a registered nurse or a physician.

KRS 314.035(2) states:

... It shall be unlawful for any person, other than a nurse, a physician assistant, or a physician, to provide dialysis care in a licensed renal dialysis facility unless that person holds a current active credential from the board to practice as a dialysis technician.

KRS 314.011(2) defines "delegation" as:

... Directing a competent person to perform a selected nursing activity or task in a selected situation under the nurse's supervision and pursuant to administrative regulations promulgated by the board in accordance with the provisions of KRS Chapter 13A.

Kentucky Administrative Regulation 201 KAR 20:400 governs delegation of nursing tasks to unlicensed persons. 201 KAR 20:470 governs dialysis technician credentialing requirements and training program standards. A copy of the regulations may be obtained from the Legislative Research Commission website at [www.lrc.state.ky.us](http://www.lrc.state.ky.us)