ROLE OF THE REGISTERED NURSE/LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE IN SPINAL SCREENING FOR DETECTION OF COMMON ABNORMAL CURVATURES OF THE SPINE

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

Board staff receive inquiries related to the scope of practice of the registered nurse and licensed practical nurse in the performance of spinal screening procedures for detection of common abnormal curvatures of the spine. After review of the statutes governing registered nursing practice and licensed practical nursing practice, as well as current evidence based practice, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following advisory opinions:
**Advisory Opinion**

**Registered Nurse**

It is within the scope of registered nursing practice for a registered nurse who is educationally prepared and clinically competent to perform spinal screening procedures, conduct a screening program, supervise and/or teach appropriate others to do spinal screening if the following criteria are met:

1) Evidence of educational preparation and clinical competence relative to spinal screening is documented in personnel records of the employer and/or the registered nurse's personal records;

2) The procedure is performed according to written, approved organizational policy and procedures;

3) Protocols are established for recording and reporting of data;

4) Protocols are established for referral procedures and follow-up screening requirements.

**Licensed Practical Nurse**

The licensed practical nurse who is educationally prepared and clinically competent may perform spinal screening procedures under the direction and supervision of a registered nurse, APRN, licensed physician or physician assistant and as noted under the criteria.

---

**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 issued Advisory Opinion Statement #41 RN/LPN Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines which contains the KBN Decision-Making Model for Determining Scope of Practice for RNs/LPNs, and published the APRN Scope of Practice Decision Making Model 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 KBN Decision-Making Model for Determining Scope of Practice for RNs/LPNs may be downloaded from the Board's website [https://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/41%20KBN%20Decision-Making%20Model%20for%20Determining%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20for%20RNs-LPNs.pdf](https://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/41%20KBN%20Decision-Making%20Model%20for%20Determining%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20for%20RNs-LPNs.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%20Decision%20Making%20Model.pdf](http://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/APRN%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20Decision%20Making%20Model.pdf).
Applicable Statutes From the Kentucky Nursing Laws

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 practitioner and as further authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Scope and 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 medications 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, advanced practice registered nurse, physician assistant, 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

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

Approved: 6/1983
Revised: 10/1984; 12/1992
Reviewed: 10/1996
Editorial Revision: 10/2015; 4/2018
Withdrawn from Publication: 2/2005
Re-published: 10/2015