

**AOS #09 - Wound Assessment, Staging & Treatment**  
(Revised 12/2023)



**KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING**  
312 Whittington Parkway, Suite 300  
Louisville, Kentucky 40222-5172  
<http://kbn.ky.gov>

**ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT**

**Role of Nurses in Assessment, Staging, and Treatment of Wounds**

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:** Wound Assessment, Staging, and Treatment by Nurses

**Approved Date:** 2/1985

**Revised Date:** 12/1992; 2/1994; 11/1997; 2/2005; 4/2007; 10/2010, 2/2018, 12/2023

**Reviewed:** 9/2010

**Editorial Revision:** 1/2011; 5/2012, 10/2015; 5/2018

**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 Statement**

The Board has received multiple inquiries on the role, utilization, and scope of practice for licensed practical nurses and registered nurses in wound assessment, staging, and treatment. After review of the statutes governing registered nursing practice, licensed practical nursing practice, advanced practice registered nursing practice, and the knowledge and skill required to perform wound assessment, staging, and treatment including surgical and/or mechanical wound care and debridement (removal of nonviable tissue), the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following advisory opinions.

### **Educational Preparation and Clinical Competency**

Pursuant to KRS 314.021(2) all nurses are held responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individual's educational preparation and current clinical competence. One method for demonstrating educational preparation and clinical competence is through obtaining relevant certifications within a specialty area. Another method would be to create a portfolio of trainings, workshops, and continuing education that demonstrates the acquisition of additional knowledge and clinical competency in the specialty area.

### **Advisory Opinion**

#### **Licensed Practical Nurse**

It is within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice for a licensed practical nurse who is educationally prepared and clinically competent to assist the qualified healthcare provider in wound assessment, staging, and treatment including debridement. This includes the application of wound dressings and wound vacs, the removal of wound drains, and the application of Unna boots.

#### **Registered Nurse**

The performance of wound assessment, staging, and treatment including surgical and/or mechanical wound debridement, as ordered by a qualified healthcare provider for an individual patient, is within the scope of registered nursing practice for the registered nurse qualified by educational preparation and clinical competence.

1. The registered nurse should perform debridement according to established written agency policy and procedure agreed upon by medical and nursing leadership, which are consistent with the definition of registered nursing practice [KRS 314.011(6)]; and
2. The registered nurse should have current documented evidence of educational preparation and clinical competence, which provides for clinical practice and demonstration of competency in the performance of debridement procedures.

#### **Advanced Practice Registered Nurse**

The performance of wound assessment, staging, and treatment including surgical and/or mechanical wound debridement is within the scope of advanced practice nursing practice for the advanced practice registered nurse qualified by educational preparation and clinical competence.

**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/KBN%20Documents/aos41-rn-lpn-scope-of-practice-determination-guidelines.pdf> and a copy of the APRN guidelines may be downloaded from the Board's website <https://kbn.ky.gov/KBN%20Documents/aprn-scope-of-practice-decision-making-model.pdf>

**Applicable Statutes from the Kentucky Nursing Laws**

KRS 314.011(8) defines "advanced practice registered nursing practice" as:

The performance of additional acts by registered nurses who have gained advanced clinical knowledge and skills through an accredited education program that prepares the registered nurse for one (1) of the four (4) APRN roles; who are certified by the American Nurses' Association or other nationally established organizations or agencies recognized by the board to certify registered nurses for advanced practice registered nursing as a certified nurse practitioner, certified registered nurse anesthetist, certified nurse midwife, or clinical nurse specialist; and who certified in at least one (1) population focus.. The additional acts shall, subject to approval of the board, include but not be limited to prescribing treatment, drugs, devices, and ordering diagnostic tests. Advanced practice registered nurses who engage in these additional acts shall be authorized to issue prescriptions for and dispense nonscheduled legend drugs as defined in KRS 217.905 and to issue prescriptions for but not to dispense Schedules II through V controlled substances as classified in KRS 218A.020, KRS 218A.060, 218A.080, 218A.100, and 218A.120, under the conditions set forth in KRS 314.042 and regulations promulgated by the Kentucky Board of Nursing on or before August 15, 2006. ...The performance of these additional acts shall be consistent with the certifying organization or agencies' scopes and standards of practice recognized by the board by administrative regulation.

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 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 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 individuals;
  - 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 Nurse's 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 the 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, 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; 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.