

OKLAHOMA BOARD OF NURSING  
2915 N. Classen Boulevard, Suite 524  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106  
(405) 962-1800

Delegation of Nursing Functions to Unlicensed Persons

- I. Purpose: To provide guidance to licensed nurses who may be delegating nursing functions to unlicensed personnel by establishing criteria for delegation tasks and for what nursing tasks are inappropriate for delegation.
  
- II. Definitions:
  - A. Delegating means entrusting the performance of selected nursing duties to individuals qualified, competent and legally able to perform such duties. [485:10-1-2]
  - B. Supervising means providing guidance by a qualified nurse for the accomplishment of the nursing task or activity with initial direction of the task or activity and periodic inspection of the actual act of accomplishing a task or activity. [485:10-1-2]
  - C. Unlicensed Person means a trained, responsible individual other than a licensed nurse, who functions in a complementary role to the licensed nurse in providing direct client care or carrying out common nursing tasks to a level of competence and safety that meets the objectives of the training.
  
- III. Policy:
  - A. Licensed nurses (Registered Nurse/Practical Nurse) within the scope of their practice are responsible for all nursing care that a client receives under their direction. Assessment of the nursing needs of a client, the plan of nursing actions, implementation of the plan, and evaluation of the plan are essential components of nursing practice. Unlicensed personnel may be used to complement the licensed nurse in the performance of nursing functions, but such personnel cannot be used as a substitute for the licensed nurse.
  - B. Delegation by Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses must fall within their respective scope of practice as defined in 59 O.S. § 567.3a., 3. & 4. Said delegation must occur within the framework of the job description of the delegatee and organizational policies and procedures and also must be in compliance with the Oklahoma Nursing Practice Act. The following sections govern the licensed nurse in delegating and supervising nursing tasks to unlicensed personnel.

- C. General Criteria for Delegation. Delegation of nursing tasks to unlicensed persons shall comply with the following requirements:
1. The licensed nurse delegating the tasks is responsible for the nursing care given to the client, and the final decision regarding which nursing tasks can be safely delegated in any specified situation is within the specific scope of that licensed nurse's professional judgment;
  2. The licensed nurse must make an assessment of the client's nursing care needs prior to delegating the nursing task;
  3. The nursing task must be one that a reasonable and prudent licensed nurse would assess to be appropriately delegated; would not require the unlicensed person to exercise nursing assessment, judgment, evaluation or teaching skills; and, can be properly and safely performed by the unlicensed person involved without jeopardizing the client's welfare;
  4. The unlicensed person shall have documented competencies necessary for the proper performance of the task on file with the employer. Written procedures shall be made available for the proper performance of each task; and
  5. The licensed nurse shall adequately supervise the performance of the delegated nursing task in accordance with the requirements of supervision as found in 59 O.S. § 567.1, *et seq.*
- D. Supervision. The degree of supervision required shall be determined by the licensed nurse after an evaluation of appropriate factors involved, including, but not limited to, the following:
1. the stability of the condition of the client;
  2. the training and capability of the unlicensed person to whom the nursing task is delegated;
  3. the nature of the nursing task being delegated; and
  4. the proximity and availability of a licensed nurse to the unlicensed person when performing the nursing task.
- E. Delegation of Nursing Tasks. By way of example, and not in limitation, the following nursing tasks may be considered within the scope of nursing practice to be delegated, and may be delegated provided the delegation is in compliance with 59 O.S. § 567.1, *et seq.*
1. Nursing tasks that may be delegated are those which do not require nursing assessment, judgment, evaluation and teaching during implementation; such as,
    - a. the collecting, reporting, and documentation of simple data; and
    - b. tasks which meet or assist the client in meeting basic human needs, including, but not limited to: nutrition, hydration, mobility, comfort, elimination, socialization, rest and hygiene.
  2. The Five Rights of Delegation provide an additional resource to facilitate decisions about delegation, in accordance with National Council of State

Boards of Nursing's *Concept and Decision-Making Process National Council Position Paper, 1995*, as listed below:

- a. **Right Task:** One that is delegable for a specific patient.
  - b. **Right Circumstances:** Appropriate patient setting, available resources, and other relevant factors considered.
  - c. **Right Person:** Right person is delegating the right task to the right person to be performed on the right person.
  - d. **Right Direction/Communication:** Clear, concise description of the task, including its objective, limits and expectations.
  - e. **Right Supervision:** Appropriate monitoring, evaluation, intervention, as needed, and feedback.
- F. Nursing Tasks That May Not Be Delegated. By way of example, and not in limitation, the following are nursing tasks that are not within the scope of sound nursing judgment to delegate:
1. Nursing tasks which require nursing assessment, judgment, evaluation and teaching during implementation; such as,
    - a. physical, psychological, and social assessment which requires nursing judgment, intervention, referral or follow-up;
    - b. formulation of the plan of nursing care and evaluation of the client's response to the care provided;
    - c. administration of medications except as authorized by state and/or federal regulations.
- G. Transference of Delegated Nursing Tasks. It is the responsibility of the licensed nurse to assess each client prior to delegation of a nursing task and determine that the unlicensed person has the competency to perform the nursing task in that client's situation.
- H. In delegating personal care a licensed nurse is not required to assess each client but must periodically assess the competency of the caregiver in those activities.
- I. The nurse and unlicensed person must function within the policies of the employing institution.

#### IV. Selected References

National Council of State Boards of Nursing's *Concept and Decision-Making Process National Council Position Paper, 1995*

#### V. Regulatory Authority

59 O.S. §567.1, *et. seq.*, and OAC 485:10-1-2