

NURSES

What are the various types of nurses who may be licensed in Washington?

There are three types of nurses licensed by the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC): Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs), Registered Nurses (RNs), and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).¹ Each type of nurse has a different scope of practice.

What is an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner?

An ARNP is a registered nurse who has undergone a formal graduate education program and has achieved national specialty certification to assume primary responsibility for continuous and comprehensive management of a broad range of patient care, concerns, and problems.² ARNPs function within his/her scope of practice according to the NCQAC-approved certification program and standards of care developed by professional organizations.³ ARNPs are qualified to assume primary responsibility for the care of their patients.⁴

ARNPs are expected to use independent judgment as well as collaborative interaction with other health care practitioners when indicated in the assessment and management of wellness and conditions appropriate to the ARNP's area of specialization.⁵

What general functions may an ARNP perform?

Acting within the scope of the ARNP's knowledge, experience, and practice, a licensed ARNP may:⁶

- Examine patients and establish diagnoses by patient history, physical examination, and other methods of assessment;
- Admit, manage, and discharge patients to and from health care facilities;
- Order, collect, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests;
- Manage health care by identifying, developing, implementing, and evaluating a plan of care and treatment for patients;
- Prescribe therapies and medical equipment;

¹ Chapter 18.79 RCW.

² WAC 246-840-010(1), -300(1).

³ WAC 246-840-300(4).

⁴ WAC 246-840-300(2).

⁵ WAC 246-840-300(3).

⁶ WAC 246-840-300(6).

- Prescribe medications when granted authority by the NCQAC;
- Refer patients to other health care practitioners, services, or facilities; and
- Perform procedures or provide care services that are within the scope of practice of the ARNP according to the NCQAC approved certification program.

What designations and certifications of ARNPs are recognized in Washington?

The NCQAC recognizes three designations of ARNPs: nurse practitioner (NP) , certified nurse midwife (CNM), and certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). An ARNP must maintain certification by an accredited certifying body. Nurse practitioners may be certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the National Certification Corporation for Obstetric, Gynecological, and Neonatal Nursing, or the Pediatric Nursing Certification Board. Certified nurse midwives must be certified by the American Midwifery Certification Board. Certified registered nurse anesthetists must be certified by the Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists.⁷

Since 2009, the NCQAC no longer accepts initial ARNP licensure applications from nurses certified as a community health nurse, maternal/GYN/neonatal nurse, medical/surgical nurse, occupational health nurse, neurosurgical nurse, enterostomal therapist, or psychiatric mental health clinical nurse specialist.⁸

May an ARNP prescribe legend drugs and controlled substances?

Upon approval by the NCQAC, an ARNP may prescribe legend drugs and controlled substances contained in Schedule V of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act.⁹ An ARNP may prescribe Schedule II – IV drugs¹⁰ provided that the ARNP has applied for, and has been granted prescriptive authority from the NCQAC,¹¹ And be registered with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.¹²

What is a Registered Nurse?

A registered nurse (RN) performs acts requiring substantial knowledge, judgment and skill at or under the direction of a physician, ARNP or certain other health care providers.¹³ With direction from an appropriate health care provider, an RN may administer drugs, injections, medications, treatments, tests, and inoculations to a patient.¹⁴

⁷ WAC 246-340-302. See also: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/portals/1/Documents/6000/ARNPFAQs.pdf>.

⁸ WAC 246-840-311.

⁹ RCW 18.79.050.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ WAC 246-840-410.

¹² WAC 246-840-420(4).

¹³ RCW 18.79.040(1).

¹⁴ RCW 18.79.260(2).

What is a Licensed Practical Nurse?

An LPN is able to recognize and meet the basic needs of a patient and gives routine nursing care under the direction and supervision of a physician, an ARNP, an RN or some other health care providers.¹⁵ Routine nursing care is care that is relatively free of scientific complexity, and the clinical and behavioral state of the patient is relatively stable.¹⁶

In complex situations, the LPN facilitates patient care by carrying out selected aspects of nursing care to assist the ARNP or RN in their duties.¹⁷

An LPN may also administer drugs, medications, treatments, tests, injections, and inoculations under the direction of a physician, ARNP, RN, or certain other health care providers if the order to so act is put in writing within a reasonable time and made a part of the patient's record.¹⁸

What is a Nursing Technician?

A Nursing Technician is a nursing student, or a recent graduate from a nursing school employed in a hospital or nursing home.¹⁹ Nursing technicians may function only under the direct supervision of a Registered Nurse who agrees to act as a supervisor, and who is immediately available to the nursing technician.²⁰ A Nursing Technician may perform specific nursing functions based upon their ability and level of education.²¹ Nursing Technicians may not administer chemotherapy, blood or blood products, intravenous medications or scheduled drugs, and may not care for central lines.²²

What is a physician's role in relation to nurses?

A physician must adequately supervise auxiliary staff that works in the physician's practice. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.²³ A physician must exercise care not to permit or request a nurse working under the physician's direction or supervision to exceed the scope of practice for which the nurse is licensed or approved, as a physician can be disciplined for aiding and abetting an unlicensed person to practice medicine.²⁴

¹⁵ RCW 18.79.270.

¹⁶ WAC 246-840-705(2).

¹⁷ WAC 246-840-705(2).

¹⁸ RCW 18.79.270.

¹⁹ RCW 18.79.340(1).

²⁰ RCW 18.79.350(2).

²¹ RCW 18.79.350(3).

²² RCW 18.79.350(1).

²³ RCW 18.130.180(14).

²⁴ RCW 18.130.180(10).