

## **SURGICAL TECHNOLOGISTS**

### **What is a surgical technologist?**

A surgical technologist is a person, regardless of title, who performs tasks in a surgical setting under the supervision and delegation of authority of a physician, physician's assistant, osteopathic physician, osteopathic physician's assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, podiatrist, dentist, physician's assistant surgical assistant, or naturopathic physician acting within the scope of his or her license.<sup>1</sup>

### **Must surgical technologists be registered?**

Yes. Anyone representing himself or herself as a surgical technologist by title or by description as a person who performs tasks in the surgical setting under the delegation of authority of a licensed health care practitioner must register with the Department of Health as a surgical technologist.<sup>2</sup> Registered nurses, practical nurses, and other credentialed providers acting within the scope of their license or credential do not need to register as surgical technologists.<sup>3</sup>

### **Can appropriate military training or experience be used to satisfy the requirements to be a surgical technologist?**

Yes. Military training or experience which is substantially equivalent to state standards satisfies the requirements to be a surgical technologist.<sup>4</sup>

### **What tasks do surgical technologists typically perform?**

Surgical technologists perform tasks that typically consist of, but are not limited to, the following tasks in a surgical setting:<sup>5</sup>

- Prepare basic sterile packs and trays.
- Assist with physical preparation of the operating room, creating the sterile field, and maintaining sterile technique.
- Identify and select appropriate packs, trays and accessory/specialty equipment for each surgery.
- Prepare supplies and instruments for a sterile field.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 18.215.010, WAC 246-939-010.

<sup>2</sup> RCW 18.215.020.

<sup>3</sup> RCW 18.215.030, WAC 246-939-030(4).

<sup>4</sup> RCW 18.215.090.

<sup>5</sup> WAC 246-939-030.

- Assist with the count of instruments, sponges, needles, and other surgical items.
- Pass correct instruments, supplies and sutures as needed by the surgeon.
- Sponge or suction the operative site, retract tissue for exposure, and assist with irrigation of the operative site under direct supervision.
- Cut sutures placed by a licensed health care provider.
- Prepare specimens for submission to pathology.
- Fire an automatic staple gun as directed by a licensed health care provider for skin stapling. Deep tissue stapling is not permitted.
- Move drugs to the sterile field.

**Are there tasks that a surgical technologist is not allowed to do?**

Yes. A surgical technologist is not allowed to dispense medications or to do activities that constitute the practice of medicine including:<sup>6</sup>

- Prescribing or administering.
- Penetrating or severing tissue, including but not limited to, suturing, cutting and incisions, regardless of instrumentality.
- Dispensing medications.

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<sup>6</sup> WAC 246-939-050.