

Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing
Advisory Ruling on Nursing Practice

Title: Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse Scope of Practice

Advisory Ruling Number: 25-01

Authority: The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (Board) is created and authorized by Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) c. 13, §§ 13, 14, 14A, 15 and 15D, and G.L. c. 112, §§ 74 through 81C to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the Commonwealth through the regulation of nursing practice and education. In addition, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 8 authorizes the Board to make advisory rulings with respect to the applicability to any person, property, or state of facts of any statute or regulation enforced or administered by the Board. Each nurse is required to practice in accordance with accepted standards of practice and is responsible and accountable for his or her nursing judgments, actions, and competency. The Board's regulation at 244 CMR 9.03(6) requires all nurses to comply with any other law and regulation related to licensure and practice.

Date Issued: February 12, 2025

Date Revised:

Scope of Practice: Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPNs)

Purpose: To guide the practice of the RNs and LPNs (licensed nurses)

Advisory: Nurses licensed by the Board will engage in the practice of nursing in accordance with the regulations found in 244 CMR 3.00¹ and accepted professional standards. Licensed nurses must acquire and maintain necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities before assuming responsibility and accountability for performing nursing activities.

RNs and LPNs are individually responsible and accountable for their nursing actions, judgments and competencies and practicing within their scope². There is no regulatory requirement for RNs to supervise LPNs. Neither RNs nor LPNs may perform activities that are not within their scope of practice. Although licensed nurses implement orders received from authorized prescribers (for full guidance, refer to Advisory Ruling 93-24

¹ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 3.00 Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-3-registered-nurse-and-licensed-practical-nurse/download>

² Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 9.00 Standards of Conduct, 9.03 (10). Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-3-registered-nurse-and-licensed-practical-nurse/download>
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-9-standards-of-conduct-for-nurses/download>

Accepting, Verifying, Transcribing and Implementing Medication Orders³), authorized prescribers may not delegate activities or procedures that are not within the nurse's scope of practice, even if the authorized prescriber is physically on site and available. The same holds true for RNs, who may not delegate to LPNs.

Definitions:

Licensed nurse means an individual licensed by the Board to practice as a Registered Nurse or as a Licensed Practical Nurse pursuant to M.G.L. c. 112 §§ 74 and 74A⁴.

Nursing Assessment. A systematic process of determining nursing care needs based upon the collection and interpretation of data relevant to the patient's health⁵.

- Systematic Assessment means the nursing assessment performed by registered nurses which includes gathering information concerning the patient's individual physiological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual needs. It is the first step in the successful evaluation of a patient. Subjective and objective data collection are an integral part of this process. Part of the assessment includes data collection by obtaining vital signs such as temperature, respiratory rate, heart rate, blood pressure, and pain level using an age or condition appropriate pain scale. The assessment identifies current and future care needs of the patient by allowing the formation of a nursing diagnosis. The nurse recognizes normal and abnormal patient physiology and helps prioritize interventions and care.⁶ It is not within an LPN's scope of practice to complete a systematic assessment.
- Basic Health Assessment means collecting data and performing focused assessments. LPNs may perform basic health assessments. An RN may review an LPN's assessment data to determine the patient's needs and develop the plan of care⁷.

Nursing Plan of Care. A patient-specific, goal-directed plan for the provision of nursing care. The plan is established and modified using data derived from the registered

³ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. Advisory Ruling 93-24 Accepting, Verifying, Transcribing and Implementing Prescriber Orders. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ar-9324-accepting-verifying-transcribing-and-implementing-medication-orders/download>

⁴ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 10.00 Definitions and Severability. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-1000-definitions-and-severability/download>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ T. Toney-Butler and W. Unison-Pace. Nursing admission assessment and examination. National Library of Medicine National Center of Biotechnology Information. August 28, 2023. Accessed at [Nursing Admission Assessment and Examination - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36888888/)

⁷ The Joint Commission. Nursing Assessments- Licensed Practical Nurse. Can licensed practical nurses (LPN) perform assessments? Last reviewed by Standards Interpretation: August 31, 2022. Accessed at [Nursing Assessments - Licensed Practical Nurse | Critical Access Hospital | Provision of Care Treatment and Services PC | The Joint Commission](https://www.jointcommission.org/articles/nursing-assessments-licensed-practical-nurse/)

nurse's assessment and judgment⁸. LPNs may participate in planning and implementing nursing interventions.

Participate means to have a part in or contribute to the elements of the nursing process⁹

Competence means the knowledge, and the use of affective, cognitive, and psychomotor skills, required for the delivery of safe nursing care in accordance with accepted standards of nursing practice¹⁰.

Standards of Nursing Practice. Authoritative statements describing the level of care or performance common to the profession of nursing by which the quality of nursing practice can be judged¹¹.

Nursing Judgment means the intellectual process a nurse exercises in forming an opinion and reaching a clinical decision based upon analysis of the evidence or data derived from the nurse's assessment¹².

Nursing Activity. A task, function or service which constitutes the practice of nursing and is performed to maintain or improve the patient's health and well-being or promotes comfort for a dignified death¹³.

Unlicensed Person (UP) regardless of title, means a qualified, responsible individual who has verifiable, documented, initial and ongoing competencies. An unlicensed person functions in a complementary or assistive role to the licensed nurse in providing direct patient care or carrying out common nursing activities and is employed by an entity other than the patient¹⁴.

Supervision as used in 244 CMR 3.00: Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse, means the provision of guidance by a *delegating* licensed nurse for the accomplishment of a nursing activity with initial direction of the activity and periodic inspection of the performance of the activity¹⁵.

Delegation means the authorization by a licensed nurse to an UP to provide selected nursing activities. The licensed nurse retains responsibility and accountability for these

⁸ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 10.00 Definitions and Severability. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-1000-definitions-and-severability/download>

⁹ North Carolina Board of Nursing. LPN scope of practice clarification. Accessed at <https://www.ncbon.com/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/ps-lpn-scope-of-practice-clarification.pdf>

¹⁰ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 10.00 Definitions and Severability. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-1000-definitions-and-severability/download>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid

delegated activities. Neither LPNs nor RNs delegate nursing activities to other licensed nurses¹⁶.

Authorized Prescribers mean persons who holds current and valid controlled substances registrations issued by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration and the Drug Control Program of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health¹⁷.

Groups means specific patient populations in specific settings such as transitions in chronic disease, communicable disease care and maternity care at various healthcare system levels, including systemic, organizational, intrapersonal and interpersonal levels¹⁸. While LPNs provide care to individuals and families, only RNs may provide care to groups¹⁹.

The following table compares the RN and LPN regulations found in 244 CMR 3.00 as they pertain to their functions and responsibilities and their application to the nursing process.

COMPARISON OF LPN AND RN REGULATIONS RELATED TO SCOPE OF PRACTICE

LPN	RN
Assessment	
Assess an individual's <i>basic</i> health status, records and related health data;	<i>Systematically</i> assess health status of individuals and groups and record the health data
<i>Participate</i> in analyzing and interpreting said recorded data, and making informed judgments as to the specific elements of nursing care mandated by a particular situation	Analyze and interpret said recorded data and make informed judgments as to the specific problems and elements of nursing care mandated by a particular situation
Planning and Implementation	
<i>Participate</i> in planning and implementing nursing interventions, including appropriate health care components in nursing care plans that take account of	Plan and implement nursing intervention which includes all appropriate elements of nursing care, prescribed medical or other therapeutic regimens mandated by the

¹⁶ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. Advisory Ruling 98-02 the LPN in Charge or Nurse Supervisor Role. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ar-9802-the-lpn-in-charge-or-nurse-supervisor-role-0/download>

¹⁷ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 10.00 Definitions and Severability. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-1000-definitions-and-severability/download>

¹⁸ M. Swanson, S. T. Wong, R. Martin-Misener and A. J. Browne. The role of registered nurses in primary care and public health collaboration: a scoping review. *Wiley Online Library*. April 14, 2020. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/nop2.496?msocid=28cbeba14c596d451ab8ffcc4d206c32>

¹⁹ Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 3.00 Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses. Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-3-registered-nurse-and-licensed-practical-nurse/download>

the most recent advancements and current knowledge in the field Incorporate the prescribed medical regimen into the nursing plan of care	particular situation, scientific principles, recent advancements and current knowledge in the field
Teaching	
<i>Participate</i> in the health teaching required by the individual and family so as to maintain an optimal level of health care	Provide and coordinate health teaching required by individuals, families and groups so as to maintain the optimal possible level of health
Evaluation	
When appropriate, evaluate outcomes of basic nursing intervention and initiate or encourage change in plans of care	Evaluate outcomes of nursing intervention, and initiate change when appropriate
Collaboration and Communication with other Health Care Providers	
Collaborate, cooperate and communicate with other health care providers to ensure quality and continuity of care	Collaborate, communicate and cooperate as appropriate with other health care providers to ensure quality and continuity of care
Advocacy	
NA	Serve as patient advocate, within the limits of the law

Both RNs and LPNs may perform nursing assessments. RNs are responsible for completing the systematic patient assessment and developing the nursing plan of care²⁰. In comparison, LPNs perform basic, focused assessments and may contribute to the systematic assessment, providing important input in the planning process. When appropriate, LPNs evaluate outcomes of basic nursing interventions and initiate or encourage change in plans of care. In addition, RNs coordinate the teaching plan which LPNs may participate in implementing.

Competencies and Nursing Activities

The practice of nursing is constantly evolving as new and changing technology and therapies are introduced²¹. The MA Board uses scope of practice decision guidelines for licensed nurses to use when determining if a nursing activity is within their scope of practice. The MA Board Scope of Practice Decision Guidelines are available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-the-nursing-scope-of-practice>

The MA Board uses Advisory Rulings to determine if specific activities or specific situations are within the scope of practice for licensed nurses. The MA Board's advisory rulings are available at: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/advisory-rulings-for-the-board-of-registration-in-nursing>

²⁰ North Carolina Board of Nursing. LPN Scope of Practice Clarification. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbon.com/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/ps-lpn-scope-of-practice-clarification.pdf>

²¹ Ibid.

The LPN in the Charge Role

Although the Board does not regulate settings or staffing, it is the Board's position that it is within the LPN scope of practice to function in the charge or supervisor nurse role. The AR 98-02 *The LPN in Charge or Nurse Supervisory Role* is available at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ar-9802-the-lpn-in-charge-or-nurse-supervisor-role-0/download> The Board cannot opine on staffing regulations (both Federal and State), as these are outside of the Board's jurisdiction,

Supervision

The Board recognizes interprofessional collaboration, the intentional collaboration across professions and with care team members, patients, families, communities and other stakeholders to optimize care, to enhance the healthcare experience and strengthen outcomes²² however, non-nurses may not evaluate nursing practice but can supervise basic employment issues such as human resources, administration, legal consultation, payroll, and other employment issues. Both RNs and LPNs may assign nursing care within licensed nurses' scope of practice and delegate nursing tasks to unlicensed personnel (UPs).

Nurses in the management role are to develop and implement the necessary measures to promote and manage the delivery of safe nurse care in accordance with accepted standards of nursing practice.²³

Dual Licensure

RNs and LPNs may be licensed or certified in other professions. The dual licensed nurses must adhere to the statutes and rules pertaining to nursing. The dual licensed nurse (maintains RN and LPN licensure) is accountable to the education standard of the highest nursing credential held. An RN employed and paid as an LPN remains accountable for the standard of practice of an RN.

²² The American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships. Accessed at <https://www.aacnnursing.org/essentials/tool-kit/domains-concepts/interprofessional-partnerships>

²³ The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing. 244 CMR 9.00 *Standards of Conduct* 9.03 (46). Accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/244-cmr-9-standards-of-conduct-for-nurses/download>