

Nurse Technician Role in Alaska Concept Paper

Proposal

On behalf of Alaska’s hospitals, nursing homes, and other key healthcare providers, the Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association (AHHA) recommends changing the State of Alaska nursing regulations to allow for a new role called the Nurse Technician (NT). In this role, student nurses hired by healthcare facilities could perform the nursing skills for which they have demonstrated competency.

Background

Other states, including Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada have nursing regulations that support this role for student nurses. The benefits of these programs include:

- Career readiness: Provides nursing students with additional clinical experience and increased confidence in nursing skills upon graduation.
- Workforce support: Fills workforce gaps, especially related to the shortage of patient care technicians and Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs).
- Recruitment and retention: Provides students and facilities the opportunity to “test before buying” (i.e. hiring and accepting a job) and allows students to become familiar with organizational culture, staff, and flow of the unit.
- Enhanced partnerships between healthcare and educational institutions: Helps bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge.

Several AHHA members currently employ nursing students and allow them to practice as unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) utilizing NCSBN standards. They have realized the benefits outlined above and recognize the additional benefit of expanding the skills student nurses can perform through an NT role. Our members strongly support changing nursing regulations to allow for this new role.

Proposed Regulation Language

AHHA has identified Washington State’s Nurse Technician role and corresponding regulation as an example that could be incorporated in Alaska. While some modifications will be needed to meet Alaska’s unique needs, the Washington model provides an effective framework. The regulatory language that would be needed includes:

- Adding the definition and criteria for a Nurse Technician (NT)
- Adding the functions of the NT, the RN supervising the NT, the functions of the employing facility, and the functions of the nursing program
- Adding the steps to becoming an NT
- Other modifications as needed (for example, Alaska’s delegation regulations should exclude the NT role)



Below are the complete nursing regulations for the Nurse Technician role from Washington State.

Washington State Nursing Technician Regulations

WAC 246-840-840

Nursing technician.

The purpose of the nursing technician credential is to provide additional work related opportunities for students enrolled in an LPN, ADN, or BSN program, within the limits of their education, to gain valuable judgment and knowledge through expanded work opportunities.

(1) The nursing technician is as defined in WAC [246-840-010](#)(30).

(2) The nursing technician shall have knowledge and understanding of the laws and rules regulating the nursing technician and shall function within the legal scope of their authorization under chapter [18.79](#) RCW and shall be responsible and accountable for the specific nursing functions which they can safely perform as verified by their nursing program.

(3) The nursing technician shall work directly for the hospital, clinic or nursing home and may not be employed in these facilities through a temporary agency.

WAC 246-840-860

Nursing technician criteria.

To be eligible for employment as a nursing technician a student must meet the following criteria:

(1) Satisfactory completion of at least one academic term (quarter or semester) of a nursing program approved by the commission. The term must have included a clinical component.

(2) Currently enrolled in a nursing commission approved program will be considered to include:

(a) All periods of regularly planned educational programs and all school scheduled vacations and holidays;

(b) Thirty days after graduation from an approved program; or

(c) Sixty days after graduation if the student has received a determination from the secretary that there is good cause to continue the registration period.

(d) Current enrollment does not include:

(i) Leaves of absence or withdrawal, temporary or permanent, from the nursing educational program.

(ii) Students who are awaiting the opportunity to reenroll in nursing courses.

WAC 246-840-870

Functions of the nursing technician.

The nursing technician is authorized only to perform specific nursing functions within the limits of their education, up to their skills and knowledge, as verified by their nursing program. The nursing technician:

(1) May function only under the direct supervision of a registered nurse who has agreed to act as supervisor and is immediately available.

(2) May gather information about patients and administer care to patients.



(3) May not assume ongoing responsibility for assessments, planning, implementation, or evaluation of the care of patients. The nursing technician may participate in all aspects of the nursing care process under the guidance of the registered nurse and within the scope of the nursing technician's education.

(4) May never function independently, act as a supervisor, or delegate tasks to licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, or unlicensed personnel.

(5) May not administer chemotherapy, blood or blood products, intravenous medications, scheduled drugs, nor carry out procedures on central lines.

(6) May not perform any task or function that does not appear on the verification sent to the nursing technician's employer by the nursing program in which the nursing technician is enrolled. This document verifies that the nursing technician has demonstrated the ability and is safe to perform these tasks and functions. If the nursing technician is requested to perform any task not verified by the nursing program, the nursing technician must inform their supervisor that the task or function is not within their scope and must not perform the task.

WAC 246-840-880

Functions of the registered nurse supervising the nursing technician.

The registered nurse who is responsible for supervising the nursing technician:

(1) Is accountable at all times for the client's safety and well-being.

(2) Is responsible at all times for the nursing process as delineated in WAC [246-840-700](#) and this responsibility cannot be delegated.

(3) Shall maintain at all times an awareness of the care activities of the nursing technician and of the current assessment of the patient/resident.

(4) Shall be immediately available at all times to the nursing technician.

(5) Shall have knowledge of the specific nursing functions the nursing technician is authorized to perform. The authorized functions appear on the verification sent to the nursing technician's employer by the nursing program in which the nursing technician is enrolled.

WAC 246-840-890

Functions of the employing facility.

In addition to the responsibilities required by RCW [18.79.360](#) (4)(e), the employer of the nursing technician shall:

(1) Verify the nursing technician's enrollment in a nursing program approved by the commission.

(2) Verify that the nursing technician continues to qualify as a nursing technician and continues to be in good standing within three weeks of completion of each academic term (semester or quarter).

(3) Obtain and maintain written documentation of the specific nursing functions that the nursing technician may perform from the approved nursing program.

(4) Follow their own guidelines, policies, principles and procedures relating to nursing technicians.

(5) Identify the student nurse as a "nursing technician."

(6) Advise the department and nursing program of any practice-related action taken against the nursing technician. The employing facility shall notify the department at P.O. Box 47864, Olympia, Washington, 98504-7864.



(7) Provide training regarding the provisions of RCW [18.79.330](#) through [18.79.370](#) as specified in RCW [18.79.360](#) (4)(e).

WAC 246-840-900

Functions of the nursing program.

The nursing program in which the nursing technician is enrolled should:

(1) Provide to the employer written documentation of specific nursing functions the nursing technician may perform. This documentation should be based upon, and limited to, the nursing technician's education and demonstrated ability to safely perform the functions listed.

(2) Provide to the employer and the commission written documentation when a nursing technician is no longer considered to be in good standing as defined in WAC [246-840-010](#)(16). The nursing program should notify the employer and the commission immediately if the nursing technician is no longer in good standing. Notification to the commission should be sent to P.O. Box 47864, Olympia, Washington, 98504-7864.

WAC 246-840-905

How to register as a nursing technician.

(1) An individual shall complete an application for registration on an application form prepared and provided by the secretary of the department of health. This application shall be submitted to P.O. Box 47864, Olympia, Washington 98504-7864.

(2) Every applicant shall provide:

(a) The application fee under WAC [246-840-990](#).

(b) A signed statement from the applicant's nursing program verifying enrollment in, or graduation from, the nursing program. If the applicant has not yet graduated, this statement will include the anticipated graduation date.

(c) A signed statement from the applicant's employer or prospective employer certifying that the employer understands the role of the nursing technician and agrees to meet the requirements of RCW [18.79.360](#)(4).