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AARP 2010 Policy Supplement

Scope of Practice for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses

The package of health care reforms, signed into law by President Obama in April 2010, identifies nurses as critical players in meeting the changing health care needs of Americans. Unquestionably, nurses, especially advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), can provide much of the care we need. But first, statutory and regulatory barriers at the state and federal levels that prevent scores of nurses from practicing to the full extent of their licensure must be lifted.

The AARP Board of Directors recognized that these legal barriers are short-changing consumers and recently approved important changes to AARP policy. The updated policy is below and it is now available for you to use as a guidepost in determining where AARP stands on scope of practice issues. This policy change allows us to work together to ensure that our members and all health care consumers, especially in underserved settings such as urban and rural communities, have increased access to high quality health care.

The AARP policy on scope of practice is as follows:

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- Current state nurse practice acts and accompanying rules should be interpreted and/or amended where necessary to allow APRNs to fully and independently practice as defined by their education and certification.
- Require training and demonstrated competency (in both speaking and writing) in English as a second language, as appropriate.

Definitions for Glossary

In addition to the Chapter 7 policy changes, the following definitions were added to the glossary:

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) receive advanced clinical preparation, (generally a Master's degree and/or post Master's Certificate, although the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree is increasingly being granted). Specific titles and credentials vary by state approval processes, formal recognition and scope of practice as well as by board certification. APRNs fall into four broad categories: Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurse Anesthetist, and Nurse Midwife:

- Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are Advanced Practice RNs who provide a wide range of health care services across health care settings. NPs take health histories and provide complete physical examinations; diagnose and treat many common acute and chronic problems; interpret laboratory results and X-rays; prescribe and manage medications and other therapies; provide health teaching and supportive counseling with an emphasis on prevention of illness and health maintenance; and refer patients to other health professionals as needed. Broad NP specialty areas include: Acute Care, Adult Health, Family Health, Geriatrics, Neonatal, Pediatric, Psychiatric/Mental Health, School Health, and Women's Health.
- Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) practice in a variety of health care environments and participate in mentoring other nurses, case management, research, designing and conducting quality improvement programs, and serving as educators and consultants. Specialty areas include but are not limited to: Adult Health, Community Health, Geriatrics, Home Health, Pediatrics, Psychiatric/Mental Health, School Health and Women's Health. There are also many sub-specialties.
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) administer anesthesia and related care before and after surgical, therapeutic, diagnostic and obstetrical procedures, as well as pain management and emergency services, such as airway management. Practice settings include operating rooms, dental offices and outpatient surgical centers. CRNAs deliver more than 32 million anesthetics to patients in the United States.
- Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs) provide primary care to women, including gynecological exams, family planning advice, prenatal care, management of low risk labor and delivery, and neonatal care. Practice settings include hospitals, birthing centers, community clinics and patient homes.