

MEDICATION AIDES IN NURSING HOMES: ROLE OF RN AND LPN

*A Position Statement does not carry the force and effect of the Nursing Practice Act or Administrative Code.
The Position Statements adopted by the Board provide additional clarification to
licensees to promote safe nursing practice.*

Issue:

What is the licensed nurse's role when working with medication aides in nursing homes?

NCBON regulates nursing practice and licensed nurses but does not have jurisdiction over the facility or the medication aide. NC Division of Health Service Regulation (NC DHSR) is responsible for licensing and regulating health care facilities, including nursing homes and adult care homes, and is additionally responsible for the regulation of medication aides. More information on medication aides and the Medication Aide Registry can be located at the N.C. Nurse Aide I Registry of NC DHSR.

Medication aides who administer medications in nursing homes must be listed on the Medication Aide for Nursing Homes Registry with NC DHSR.

The licensed nurse needs to be aware of the role of the medication aide in a nursing home setting. The medication aide role should not be confused with medication aides/technicians who administer medications in adult care settings such as assisted living facilities and group homes. These separate, distinct roles of medication aides have different requirements and are not interchangeable. The licensed nurse has a duty to recognize the role of the medication aide working in nursing homes and is accountable for the appropriate delegation of administration of medication consistent with the medication aide's training, competence, and agency policy.

Analysis:**RN Role:**

The RN has the overall responsibility and accountability for assessing the competence of the medication aide in a nursing home to include validating the qualifications, knowledge, and competence in skills in administering medication. In addition, the RN is responsible for supervising, teaching, evaluating, and verifying that medication administration tasks have been performed by the medication aide in a nursing home as delegated and in accordance with established standards of practice. Any professional judgment required in medication administration such as deciding to withhold a medication and assessing the need for a prn medication, would be the RN's responsibility.

LPN Role:

The LPN is accountable for the decision to delegate medication administration to a qualified medication aide in a nursing home. The LPN oversees the performance of the medication aide in a nursing home, verifying that medication administration tasks have been performed as delegated and in accordance with established standards of practice. Any professional judgment required in medication administration, such as deciding to withhold a medication or assessing the need for a prn medication, would be the LPN's responsibility.

Medication Aide Activities in a Nursing Home:

Medication aides are approved to administer medications via the following routes:

- Oral, buccal, sublingual
- Otic
- Ophthalmic
- Inhalant (oral/nasal)
- Nebulizer
- Topical (including transdermal)
- Vaginal
- Rectal

Medication aides in nursing homes are prohibited by law from administering intravenous or injectable medications according to N.C.G.S. 131E-114.2(a)(2).

Conclusion:

The licensed nurse may delegate medication administration to a medication aide in a nursing home. The licensed nurse is accountable to ensure all delegated tasks meet the requirements of 21 NCAC 36. 0221.

Law(s), Rule(s), and Other Resource(s):

[G.S. 90-171- Nursing Practice Act](#)

[21 NCAC 36 .0221\(b\) and \(c\) – License Required](#)

[21 NCAC 36 .0224 \(d\),\(i\), and \(j\) – Components of Nursing Practice for the Registered Nurse](#)

[21 NCAC 36 .0225 \(d\) – Components of Nursing Practice for the Licensed Practical Nurse](#)

[21 NCAC 36 .0401\(b\) and \(c\) - Roles of Unlicensed Personnel](#)

[G.S. 90-171.56- Medication aide requirements \(Nurses Aide Registry Act\)](#)

[G.S. 131E-114.2 – Use of medication aides to perform technical aspects of medication administration \(Health Care Facility Licensure Act\)](#)

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