



# HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

POSITION STATEMENT  
for RN Practice

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*A Position Statement does not carry the force and effect of law and rules but is adopted by the Board as a means of providing direction to licensees who seek to engage in safe nursing practice. Board Position Statements address issues of concern to the Board relevant to protection of the public and are reviewed regularly for relevance and accuracy to current practice, the Nursing Practice Act, and Board Administrative Code Rules.*

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## ISSUE

Registered Nurses (RN) may collaborate with other health care providers in determining the appropriate health care for a patient and may assess the health status of a client.

## RN ROLE

1. May interview, perform and document a history and physical exam for health screening purposes and/or for use by and at the request of a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant provided there are agency policies/procedures allowing this, and she/he has received formal education/training in this activity with competency validation.
2. May perform a complete history and physical or components thereof including bimanual, breast and prostate exams.
3. Documentation of findings must include the legal signature of the RN performing the exam.
4. Purpose of performing this activity is to distinguish normal from abnormal findings only and to refer any abnormal findings to a higher level medical provider.
5. Can extract information (including medical diagnoses) from the client's medical plans of care, progress notes, and laboratory/diagnostic reports and prepare a discharge summary that is later validated by the attending physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.

## NOTES

- A. It is not within the RN scope of practice to make a medical diagnosis, identify medical problems, develop medical treatment plans, or declare someone "free" of illness.**
- B. The legal scope of practice is the same for all registered nurses, whether employed by a health care provider, hospital, or other health care entity. Scope of practice may be restricted, but cannot be expanded, by employers including health care providers.**
- C. Only the Nurse Practitioner can make a diagnosis or prescribe a medical treatment regimen.**

## REFERENCES

[G.S.90-171.20\(7\)\(e\) – Nursing Practice Act](#)

[G.S. 90-18.2 - Medical Law](#)

[21 NCAC 36.0224 Components of Nursing Practice for the Registered Nurse](#)

[21 NCAC 36. 0802 – NP Scope of Practice](#)

Revised: 4/2007; 11/2009; 9/2018  
Reviewed: 2/2013; 10/2015