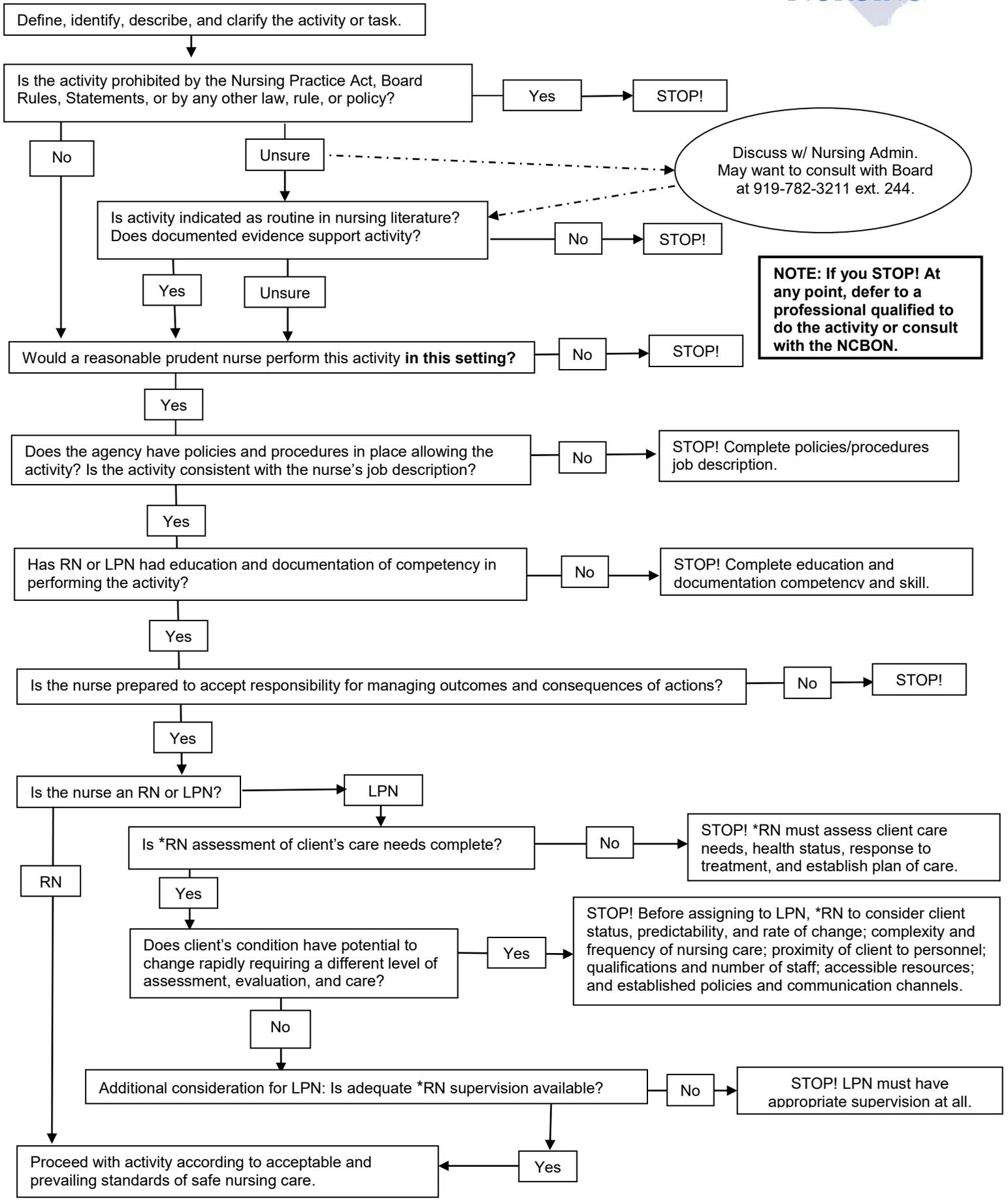


# SCOPE OF PRACTICE DECISION TREE FOR THE RN AND LPN



**NOTE: If you STOP! At any point, defer to a professional qualified to do the activity or consult with the NCBON.**



## SCOPE OF PRACTICE DECISION TREE FOR RN AND LPN

RN and LPN scopes of practice are defined by the Nursing Practice Act (Law) and the North Carolina Administrative Code (Rules). Because the roles and responsibilities of nurses are influenced by the healthcare system which is ever-changing and increasing in complexity, it is important that the nurse makes valid, reliable decisions regarding his/her own scope of practice. This tool is intended to provide direction in that decision making process. These questions offer additional guidance for the nurse's consideration.

- I. Define the Activity/Task
  - a. Describe, clarify the problem/need.
  - b. Does it require a healthcare provider's order?
  - c. Is the activity an independent RN action?
  - d. Does the task require an RN or other practitioner's direction?
  - e. What is the clinical environment in which the task will be completed?
  - f. What will be needed to safely complete the activity?
  - g. Who should be involved in the decision?
  
- II. Legality
  - a. Could the nurse perform the activity or task and meet the standards of safe nursing practice as defined by NC nursing laws and rules?
  - b. Is the task prohibited by nursing law or rules, or precluded by any other law or rule (e.g., Pharmacy Practice Act, Medical Practice Act, Facility Rules, etc.?)
  - c. Does the facility have a policy in place including the RN and/or LPN as appropriate to complete the activity?
  - d. Is the activity consistent with pre-licensure, post basic or approved continuing education?
  - e. Is there evidence to support that the activity is within acceptable and prevailing standards of safe nursing care (i.e., national nursing organization/association standards, nursing literature/research, agency accreditation standards, board position statement, and/or community standard)?
  
- III. Competency
  - a. Is there documentation the nurse has completed appropriate education to perform the activity?
  - b. Is there documentation the nurse has demonstrated appropriate knowledge, skill and ability to complete the activity?
  
- IV. Safety
  - a. Is the activity safe and appropriate to perform with this patient/client at this time?
  - b. Is the activity safe and appropriate to perform only in specific environment where necessary assistive equipment and personnel will be available in case of an unexpected response to assure patient safety and quality of care?
  - c. What is the potential outcome for patient if you do or do not perform procedure?
  
- V. Accountability
  - a. Is the nurse willing to be accountable for the activity?
  - b. Is the nurse prepared to accept the consequences of activity?
  - c. Would a reasonable or prudent nurse complete the activity?
  
- VI. Additional considerations for LPN
  - a. Will adequate RN supervision be available?
  - b. Does activity have potential to significantly change the medical status of patient/client, resulting in the need to provide assessment and care requiring a different level of professional licensure?

### References:

- G.S. 90-171.20 (7) and (8) [Nursing Practice Act](#)  
[21 NCAC 36.0224 Components of Practice for the Registered Nurse](#)  
[21 NCAC 36.0225 Components of Practice for the Licensed Practical Nurse](#)