



Summary of Select Nursing Practice Act Provisions Relating to Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Practice

The California Board of Registered Nursing (Board) provides the following summary of select nursing laws governing the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) practice. This summary is not exhaustive and is not intended to address facility staffing, eligibility, or other similar requirements. (See e.g., [Cal. Code Regs., tit. 22, §§ 70231-70239.](#)) More information about the registered nurse scope of practice generally is available on the Board's website at www.rn.ca.gov.

CRNAs are advanced practice registered nurses that provide specialty anesthesia services—they are both licensed registered nurses and anesthesia specialists certified by the Board. (*Cal. Society of Anesthesiologists v. Brown* (2012) 204 Cal.App.4th 390, 395, 401 [hereafter *Society of Anesthesiologists*]; Bus. & Prof. Code, §§ [2725.5](#), [2826, subd. \(a\).](#))

As licensed registered nurses, CRNA scope of practice necessarily rests on the authority of the Nursing Practice Act ([Business and Professions Code section 2700, et seq.](#)). In particular, the scope of registered nursing practice generally includes the following four functions:

- (1) Direct and indirect patient care services that ensure the safety, comfort, personal hygiene, and protection of patients; and the performance of disease prevention and restorative measures.
- (2) Direct and indirect patient care services, including, but not limited to, the administration of medications and therapeutic agents, necessary to implement a treatment, disease prevention, or rehabilitative regimen ordered by and within the scope of licensure of a physician, dentist, podiatrist, or clinical psychologist, as defined by Section 1316.5 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (3) The performance of skin tests, immunization techniques, and the withdrawal of human blood from veins and arteries.
- (4) Observation of signs and symptoms of illness, reactions to treatment, general behavior, or general physical condition, and (A) determination of whether the signs, symptoms, reactions, behavior, or general appearance exhibit abnormal characteristics, and (B) implementation, based on observed abnormalities, of appropriate reporting, or referral, or standardized procedures, or changes in treatment regimen in

accordance with standardized procedures, or the initiation of emergency procedures. ([Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2725, subd. \(b\).](#))

With respect to CRNAs, their utilization to provide anesthesia services in an acute care facility must be approved by the facility administration and appropriate committee, and at the discretion of the physician, dentist or podiatrist. ([Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2827.](#))

In an acute care facility, CRNAs that are not employees of the facility are nonetheless subject to the bylaws of the facility and may be required by the facility to provide proof of current professional liability insurance coverage. ([Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2828.](#))

In their practice, CRNAs may administer anesthesia ordered by a physician on an individualized patient basis without physician supervision. (*Society of Anesthesiologists, supra*, 204 Cal.App.4th at 395, 402 [“the Nursing Practice Act . . . gives CRNA’s legal authority to administer anesthesia after a physician orders a course of treatment that includes anesthesia”]; [67 Cal.Ops.Atty.Gen. 122, 139 \(1984\).](#))

Within the perioperative period, CRNAs may lawfully administer anesthesia “when ordered by and within the scope of licensure of a physician, dentist or podiatrist but not pursuant to a ‘standardized procedure’ as defined in section 2725.” ([67 Cal.Ops.Atty.Gen. 122, 142 \(1984\)](#); *Society of Anesthesiologists, supra*, 204 Cal.App.4th at 405-406.)

CRNAs are responsible for their own professional conduct and may be held liable for those professional acts. ([Bus. & Prof. Code, § 2828.](#))

Additional provisions governing CRNAs may be found in the Nursing Practice Act ([Business and Professions Code section 2700, et seq.](#)) and, in particular, the Nurse Anesthetists Act ([Business and Professions Code section 2825, et seq.](#))

For question about this select summary, contact the Board through its website at: <https://rn.ca.gov/contact.shtml>.