



## Arizona State Board of Nursing

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An advisory opinion adopted by AZBN is an interpretation of what the law requires. While an advisory opinion is not law, it is more than a recommendation. In other words, an advisory opinion is an official opinion of AZBN regarding the practice of nursing as it relates to the functions of nursing. Facility policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations related to competency, validation, training, and supervision to assure the safety of their patient population and or decrease risk.

**OPINION: PROFESSIONAL NURSE**  
**ASSESS PATIENT CONDITION**  
**APPROVED DATE: 4/99**  
**REVISED DATE: 12/02, 3/03, 03/07**  
**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:**  
**SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE**

### ADVISORY OPINION THE ROLE OF THE REGISTERED NURSE IN ASSESSING PATIENT/CLIENT CONDITIONS

It is within the Scope of Practice for a Registered Nurse (RN) to\*: (1.) assess patients, recognize the potential for, or existence or absence of an immediate life threatening condition or active labor; (2.) initiate appropriate nursing intervention and care; (3.) report findings to an appropriately licensed individual; and (4.) pursuant to orders, when such orders are required, implement care, treatments, medication administration, and either discharge the patient or perform ongoing assessment for either stabilization and/or transfer of the patient if the following requirements are met:

#### General Requirements

- A. Written policy, procedures and protocols regarding the RN's responsibilities in assessing patient conditions including the potential for or existence of an immediate life threatening condition and instituting appropriate nursing actions are developed and maintained by the agency/employer.
- B. Only RN's who have satisfactorily demonstrated competencies in the area of practice in the clinical setting are allowed to perform such functions. These competencies include but are not limited to: knowledge of anatomy and physiology pertinent to the area of practice in the clinical setting, knowledge of indications of clinical conditions specific to the area of clinical expertise that have potential for or presence of actual life threatening condition, knowledge of parameters for assessing patient conditions and the presence of potential or existent life threatening conditions, knowledge of nursing interventions pertinent to clinical conditions of the area of clinical practice, and knowledge of parameters for reporting the findings of assessments and findings of life threatening conditions.
- C. Documentation of supervised clinical practice and competency is on file with the agency/employer.

\*While this Advisory Opinion is not limited to any particular nursing service, setting or specialty, examples of the types of assessments that RN's may perform include:

- Assessment of the presence or absence of labor including fetal heart tones, the regularity and duration of uterine contractions, cervical dilation and effacement, fetal station, and status of uterine membranes, i.e. ruptured, or intact.
- Assessment of risk of suicide or homicide, disorientation, and risk of assault behavior to self or others

#### Rationale:

To ensure consistency and competency in performing physical assessments.

#### References:

ANA Scope of Practice - 2004

The Lippincott Manual of Nursing Practice, Eighth Edition, 2005

Clinical Nursing Skills and Techniques, Fifth Edition, Mosby, 2002

