



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: REGISTERED NURSE
FIRST ASSISTANT**
APPROVED: 10/87
**REVISED DATE: 1/02, 7/04, 7/07, 3/11, 9/13,
7/14**
ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:

Within the Scope of Practice of X RN LPN

ADVISORY OPINION REGISTERED NURSE FIRST ASSISTANT – RNFA

It is within the scope of practice of a Registered Nurse who can demonstrate the necessary education, knowledge, judgment, certification, and skills, to practice as a RNFA, assisting the surgeon during surgical procedures. The RNFA is not authorized to independently perform a surgical procedure which is the primary purpose of the surgery, or to perform organ transplants.

The Board of Nursing endorses the August, 2012 Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) position statement on RN First Assistants.

I. General Requirements

- A. The RNFA will comply with the policies as delineated by the employer/facility and meet the requirements of the credentialing review committee (if any).
- B. The RNFA will assist the surgeon in the performance of a surgical procedure and shall function as an RNFA only when the surgeon is immediately available in the practice setting during the entire course of the operative procedure.
- C. Beginning January 1, 2020 the minimal education level for an RNFA will be a baccalaureate degree. RNFAs who do not have a baccalaureate degree but are practicing prior to January 1, 2020 are allowed to continue practicing as RNFAs. (AORN “position statement” 2012)

II. Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications to practice as an RNFA are: ¹

- A. Certification as a Certified Nurse of the Operation Room (CNOR) or certification as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse.
- B. Successful completion of an approved RNFA program that meets the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN, 2012) RNFA criteria
- C. Compliance with all statutes, regulations, and institutional policies related to the role of the RNFA (AORN, 2012).
- ¹ D. APRNs’ who are practicing as an RNFA in Arizona prior to 1/1/2016 are allowed to

¹ Certified Nurse Midwives/Certified Midwives assisting in OB/GYN surgeries, refer to the American College of Nurse-Midwives April 2012 position statement. Which states:

continue to Practice. APRNs' who are not working as an RNFA prior to 1/1/2016 must acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe/competent surgical first assistant services by completing a program that meets the content of the AORN standards of First Assistant Education Programs which may include a standalone program or is a portion of a graduate or post graduate program (eg- additional course work included in a graduate APRN program.)

III. Role of the RNFA within the intra-operative functions includes but is not limited to (AORN, 2012):

1. Preoperative patient management in collaboration with other health care providers, such as: AORN standards," 2012
 - a. Performing focused preoperative nursing assessments,
 - b. Communicating and collaborating with other health care providers regarding the surgical patient plan of care
2. Intraoperative performance of RNFA techniques as in:
 - a. Using surgical instruments and medical devices
 - b. Providing surgical site exposure,
 - c. Handling and/or cutting tissue,
 - d. Providing hemostasis,
 - e. Suturing
3. Postoperative patient management in collaboration with other health care providers in the immediate postoperative period and beyond, such as:
 - a. Participating in postoperative rounds
 - b. Assisting with patient discharge planning and identifying appropriate community resources as needed.

IV. Rational

The Board of Nursing recognizes the role of the RNFA as being within the scope of practice of an RN and endorses the August 2012 AORN position statement on RN First Assistants.

V. References

American College of Nurse-Midwives. (2012). *Position statement: The certified nurse midwife/certified midwife as first assistant during surgery*. Retrieved from <http://midwife.org/ACNM/files/ACNMLibraryDate/UPLOADFILENAME/000000000270/FirstAssistApril20012.pdf>

Association of Operating Room Nurses. (2011). *AORN standards for RN first assistant education programs*. Retrieved from [http://www.aorn.org/Clinical_Practice/RNFA_Resources/First_Assiting_\(RNFA\).asp](http://www.aorn.org/Clinical_Practice/RNFA_Resources/First_Assiting_(RNFA).asp)

Association of Operating Room Nurses. (2012). *AORN position statement on RN first assistants*. Retrieved from http://www.aorn.org/Clinical_Practice/Position_Statements/Position_Statements.asp

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