

# Guidelines

## Guidelines on Delegation and Supervision for Nurses

### Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist nurses in Australia to make decisions in relation to delegation and supervision within a nursing context in a variety of health care settings. These guidelines will also assist employers of nurses to understand the accountability and responsibilities of nurses in relation to delegation and supervision.

### Introduction

The purpose of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is to lead a national approach with state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities in evolving standards for statutory nursing and midwifery regulation. The membership of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council consists of all state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities and two public members.

Registered nurses<sup>1</sup> and enrolled nurses<sup>2</sup> in Australia are regulated and accountable to the community for providing quality care through safe, ethical and effective practice. To assist in achieving this, the state and territory nurse regulatory authorities set standards for nursing practice. The *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered and Enrolled Nurse* have been adopted by the nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities in all states and territories. These competency standards have been developed and are maintained by ANMC and include reference to delegation and supervision. In addition nurse and midwifery regulatory authorities, in accordance with provisions of legislation under which they function, may establish policies for supervision.

### Delegation and Supervision

Within these guidelines the terms delegation and supervision are used as follows:

- In the nursing context *delegation* is the conferring of an authority to perform activities of care for a patient/client on an individual.

<sup>1</sup> Division 1 in Victoria

<sup>2</sup> Division 2 in Victoria

- *Supervision* incorporates the elements of direction, guidance, oversight and co-ordination of activities. The requirements for supervision of the enrolled nurse, either direct or indirect, may be specified in relevant state/territory legislations and/or policies. Supervision may be direct or indirect.
- *Direct supervision* is provided when the registered nurse is actually present, observes works with and directs the person who is being supervised.
- *Indirect supervision* is provided when the registered nurse is easily contactable but does not directly observe the activities.

On initial registration, registered nurses may require support and guidance to develop confidence in delegation and supervision. Enrolled nurses will require support to make decisions on determining whether delegated activities are within their scope of practice.

The following guidelines are intended to provide guidance for registered and enrolled nurses on delegation and supervision. They can also be used as cues or indicators that a nurse is demonstrating the relevant competency standards. These guidelines are complementary to the ANMC National Competency Standards for registered and enrolled Nurses in Australia.

### Guidelines For Delegation And Supervision

- 1 The registered nurse must determine the level of skill and knowledge required to ensure the safety, comfort, and the security of the client prior to delegating care. This determination must be based on an accurate health assessment of the person including consideration of the complexity of the care required rather than the tasks to be performed.

<sup>3</sup> Nurses Board of Western Australia Position Statement For Registered the Nurses Act 1992:Unlawful Delegation

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- 2 The delegation of nursing care occurs between registered nurses, and registered nurses to enrolled nurses. The registered nurse may also delegate aspects of care, within a healthcare setting, to other healthcare workers.
- 3 The employer must ensure that there are clear role descriptions for other healthcare workers, supervision/ delegation policies and communication systems to support the registered nurse in this role.
- 4 It is the registered nurse's responsibility to provide direct or indirect supervision according to the nature of the delegated tasks. The registered nurse should understand the role and function of the enrolled nurse as well as the role and function of other healthcare workers to ensure that they are not required to function beyond the limits of their education, competence, experience and lawful authority.
- 5 Registered and enrolled nurses and other healthcare workers should only undertake activities for which the, legal authority and the competence to perform. The registered nurse retains accountability for evaluating whether the person carrying out the delegated activities maintains the relevant standards and outcomes. The person performing the delegated activity is accountable for his or her own actions and to the registered nurse.
- 6 Registered and enrolled nurses should maintain current knowledge and awareness of the appropriate legislation and bylaws relating to delegation and supervision in their state/territory of practice. Nurse regulatory authorities policies and position statements reflecting the relevant legislative requirements, may be an additional resource for nurses delegating care.
- 7 The registered nurse is responsible for assessing each activity to determine that:
  - the delegation of activity and supervision (direct or indirect) is lawful;
  - the delegation is appropriate to the context taking into consideration environment, resources, access and skill mix;
  - delegation follows appropriate consultation and planning;
  - the person has the appropriate level of knowledge, skill, experience and competence to perform the delegated activity;
  - the person who has been delegated the activity understands and acknowledges the delegated activity, and knows when and who to ask for assistance to whom to report;
  - ongoing monitoring of the individual's health status is planned; and
  - the necessary support and supervision will be provided to the person performing the delegated activity.

These determinations must occur prior to the commencement of any delegated activity.
- 8 Registered nurses should be fully supported to able supervision to occur. Processes for seeking contact and support with the supervising registered nurse should be clearly documented and communicated within the nursing setting. Registered nurses should not be restricted in any way from providing contact, support and supervision.
- 9 An appropriately educated and experienced registered nurse may supervise across more than one setting. This is providing that the processes for supervision, and the context, are appropriate.

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### Glossary of Terms

#### Accountability

Accountability is the state of being answerable for one's decisions and actions. It cannot be delegated.

#### Competence

The combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and abilities that underpin effective performance in a professional/occupational area.

#### Competency

An attribute of a person that results in effective performance.

#### Delegation

In the nursing context delegation is the conferring of authority to perform activities of care for a patient/client on an individual.

#### Health care workers

Health care workers are those who deliver health care. In the context of this position statement this includes registered nurses, enrolled nurses, assistants in nursing and other unlicensed care assistants

#### Supervision

Supervision incorporates the elements of direction, guidance, oversight and co-ordination of activities. The requirements for supervision of the Enrolled nurse, either direct or indirect, may be specified in relevant state/territory legislations and/or policies.

#### Direct supervision

Is provided when the Registered nurse is actually present, observes, works with and directs the person who is being supervised.

#### Indirect supervision

Is provided when the Registered nurse is easily contactable but does not directly observe the activities.

#### Responsibility

The obligation that an individual assumes when undertaking to carry out planned/delegated functions. The individual who authorises the delegated function

retains accountability for evaluating whether the person carrying out the delegated activities maintains relevant standards and that the expected outcomes have been achieved.

#### Scope of Practice

That which nurses are educated, authorised and competent to perform. Scope of practice is further influenced by: the settings in which practice is undertaken, the health needs of the people, the policy requirements of the service provider

### Bibliography

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