LeadingAge Midwest
Illinois · Iowa · Missouri

Nurse Delegation Guidelines

This resource document assists licensed nurses understand appropriate nurse delegation practices.

Delegation is allowing a delegatee to perform a specific nursing activity, skill, or procedure that is beyond the delegatee's traditional role (outside of what was included in certification/licensure training) and not routinely performed.

What is required to safely carry out delegated practices?

- Education and training along with validated competence to perform the care/delegated task.
- Validated competency should consider whether knowledge evaluation (such as a written test) or skill demonstration is necessary.
- The licensed nurse who delegates the responsibility maintains overall accountability for the patient/resident. However, the delegate bears the responsibility for the skill, activity or procedure. The nurse cannot delegate nursing judgment or any activity that involves nursing judgment or critical decision making.

Who can delegate?

- Anyone that the skill, practice, or activity is within their scope of practice. (For example, an RN can delegate to another appropriately licensed individual IV cares but an LPN may not as it may not be within their scope of practice.)

Who can the task, skill, or activity be delegated to?

- Anyone that is able to complete the task, skill, or activity, based on their scope of practice. (In the above example, an RN would not be able to delegate all IV tasks unless the LPN is able to complete the tasks based on state laws.)

Five Rights of Delegation:

1. Right Task–the activity is within the delegate's job description, policies, and procedures.
2. Right Circumstance–the condition of the patient/resident is stable and the delegatee communicates changes in the patient/resident's condition.
3. Right Person–the delegatee possesses the appropriate knowledge and skills to perform the activity.
4. Right Directions and Communication–Precise instructions are provided with the opportunity to ask questions for clarification including data that must be collected, the method for collecting the data, time frame for reporting the data, and additional information pertinent to the situation. The delegatee must understand that they are not able to make any decisions or modifications in carrying out the activity without first consulting with the delegator.
5. Right Supervision and Evaluation–The delegator is responsible for monitoring the activities and patient/resident outcomes as well as appropriate documentation that the activity was completed.

Reference: National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2016. April) *National Guidelines for Nursing Delegation*. https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/NCSBN_Delegation_Guidelines.pdf