



# Standards of Practice for Nurse Practitioners

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## I. Qualifications

Nurse Practitioners are licensed independent practitioners who provide primary and/or specialty nursing and medical care in ambulatory, acute and long term care settings. They are registered nurses with specialized advanced education and clinical competency to provide health and medical care for diverse populations in a variety of primary care, acute and long term care settings. Master's, post master's or doctoral preparation is required for entry level practice. (AANP 2006)

## II. Process of Care

The nurse practitioner utilizes the scientific process and national standards of care as a framework for managing patient care. This process includes:

### A. Assessment of health status

The nurse practitioner assesses health status by:

- obtaining a relevant health and medical history
- performing a physical examination based on age and history
- performing or ordering preventive and diagnostic procedures based on the patient's age and history
- identifying health and medical risk factors

### B. Diagnosis

The nurse practitioner makes a diagnosis by:

- utilizing critical thinking in the diagnostic process
- synthesizing and analyzing the collected data
- formulating a differential diagnosis based on the history, physical examination, and diagnostic test results
- establishing priorities to meet the health and medical needs of the individual, family, or community

### C. Development of a treatment plan

The nurse practitioner, together with the patient and family, establishes an evidence based, mutually acceptable, cost-awareness plan of care that maximizes health potential.

Formulation of the treatment plan includes:

- ordering and interpreting additional diagnostic tests
- prescribing/ordering appropriate pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions
- developing a patient education plan
- appropriate consultation/referral

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D. Implementation of the plan

Interventions are based upon established priorities.

Actions by the nurse practitioners are:

- individualized
- consistent with the appropriate plan for care
- based on scientific principles, theoretical knowledge, and clinical expertise
- consistent with teaching and learning opportunities

Actions include:

- accurately conducting, supervising, and interpreting diagnostic tests
- prescribing/ordering pharmacologic agents and non pharmacologic therapies
- providing relevant patient education
- making appropriate referrals to other health professionals and community agencies

E. Follow-up and evaluation of the patient status

The nurse practitioner maintains a process for systematic follow-up by:

- determining the effectiveness of the treatment plan with documentation of patient care outcomes
- reassessing and modifying the plan with the patient and family as necessary to achieve health and medical goals

III. Care Priorities

The nurse practitioner's practice model emphasizes:

A. Patient and family education

The nurse practitioner provides health education and utilizes community resource opportunities for the individual and/or family

B. Facilitation of patient participation in self care.

The nurse practitioner facilitates patient participation in health and medical care by providing information needed to make decisions and choices about:

- promotion, maintenance, and restoration of health
- consultation with other appropriate health care personnel
- appropriate utilization of health care resources

C. Promotion of optimal health

D. Provision of continually competent care

E. Facilitation of entry into the health care system

F. The promotion of a safe environment



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**IV. Interdisciplinary/Collaborative Responsibilities**

As a licensed independent practitioner, the nurse practitioner participates as a team leader and member in the provision of health and medical care, interacting with professional colleagues to provide comprehensive care.

**V. Accurate Documentation of Patient Status and Care**

The nurse practitioner maintains accurate, legible, and confidential records.

**VI. Responsibility as Patient Advocate**

Ethical and legal standards provide the basis of patient advocacy. As an advocate, the nurse practitioner participates in health policy activities at the local, state, national and international levels.

**VII. Quality Assurance and Continued Competence**

Nurse practitioners recognize the importance of continued learning through:

- participation in quality assurance review, including systematic review of records and treatment plans on a periodic basis
- maintenance of current knowledge by attending continuing education programs
- maintenance of certification in compliance with current state law
- applying standardized care guidelines in clinical practice

**VIII. Adjunct Roles of Nurse Practitioner**

Nurse practitioners combine the roles of provider, mentor, educator, researcher, manager and consultant. The nurse practitioner interprets the role of the nurse practitioner to individuals, families, and other professionals.

**IX. Research as Basis for Practice**

Nurse practitioners support research by developing clinical research questions, conducting or participating in studies, and disseminating and incorporating findings into practice.