



Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Introduction

The following table is a comparison of the scope of practice of the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and the Medical Assistant-Registered (MA-R), Medical Assistant-Certified (MA-C), Medical Assistant-Hemodialysis Technician (MA-HT), and Medical Assistant-Phlebotomist (MA-P). The list of activities is not inclusive of the activities the LPN may perform. The [Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse Scope of Practice Advisory Opinion](#) provides a summary of the LPN scope. See the Washington State Board of Nursing [Support for Practicing Nurses](#) website for more guidance, information, and resources related to LPN scope of practice.

Abbreviations

- EEG – Electrocardiogram
- EKG – Electrocardiogram
- ID – Intradermal
- OTC – Over the Counter
- PO – Oral
- SQ – Subcutaneous
- IM – Intramuscular
- IV - Intravenous
- HCP – Health Care Provider
- ARNP – Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner
- DDS – Dentist
- DO – Osteopathic Physician and Surgeon
- DPM – Podiatric Physician and Surgeon
- LM – Licensed Midwife
- LPN – Licensed Practical Nurse
- MD – Physician and Surgeon
- ND – Naturopathic Physician
- OD - Optometrist
- RN – Registered Nurse
- PA – Physician Assistant

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Nursing Process	Assists the RN in implementing the nursing process	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific
Responsibility and Accountability	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible
Patient and Task Complexity	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes
Assessment	Yes – Focused nursing assessments	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vital signs • Observing and reporting 	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vital signs • Observing and reporting 	No	No

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Clinical and Nursing Judgment	Yes	No	No	No	No
Patient Education	Yes – Routine and non-complex	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment
Nursing Delegation	No	No	No	No	No
Autoclaving, Sterilizing Equipment and Instruments	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Aseptic Techniques	Yes – Routine, non-complex in any setting	No	Yes – Routine – Limits – not in a hospital	No	No
Routine Examinations, Procedures and Minor Office Surgeries	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with moderate sedation	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with minimal sedation.	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with minimal sedation.	No	No
Preparing and Assisting in Sterile Procedures	Yes – Routine Can prepare and assist in routine and non-complex procedures in any setting	Yes - Routine • Can prepare only Limits – not in a hospital setting	Yes – Routine Can prepare and assist Limits – not in a hospital setting	No	No
Oxygen Administration	Yes – Any administration device/method	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or Mask	No

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Urinary Catheterization	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile or non-sterile • Urethral • Indwelling or intermittent • Suprapubic replacement in an established tract 	Yes – Urethral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile or non-sterile • Indwelling or intermittent 	Yes – Urethral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile or non-sterile • Indwelling or intermittent 	No	No
Specimen Collection	Yes	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microbiological • COVID-19 testing Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microbiological • COVID-19 testing Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	No	No
Diagnostic Testing	Yes – Routine and Non-complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EKG • EEG • Respiratory Testing • CLIA-waived tests • Moderate complexity tests • Radiology procedures 	Yes – Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EKG • CLIA-waived tests Moderate complexity tests	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EKG • Respiratory Testing • CLIA-waived tests Moderate complexity tests	No	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EKG • CLIA-waived tests Moderate complexity tests
Experimental Drugs	Yes	No	No	No	No
Chemotherapy	Yes	No	No	No	No

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Medications	<p>Yes – Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By any route • Can compound and reconstitute medications • Can administer medications from multi-dose vials <p>Controlled Substances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule II-V <p>Administration of Sedating, Analgesic, and Anesthetic Agents</p> <p>Compounding and Reconstituting Medications</p>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments • Vaccines – PO, ID, SQ, and IM <p>Controlled Substances - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule III-V – Intramuscular injection only <p>¹See MA-R Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ophthalmic, topical, PO, IN, and rectal, ID, SQ, IM, and IV (except for central lines) – may interrupt an IV line, administer injection, and restart at the same rate • By unit or single dosage or by a dosage calculated and verified by HCP. Multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose. <p>Controlled Substances</p> <p>Yes – Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • III-V Scheduled Drugs <p>¹See MA-C Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topical or SQ administration of local anesthetics for fistula needle placement • Intraperitoneal administration of sterile electrolyte solutions and heparin for peritoneal dialysis <p>Controlled Substances – Not allowed</p> <p>May not administer vaccines</p>	No
Blood Products	<p>Yes</p> <p>Infusion Therapy Management</p>	No	No	No	No

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Infusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peripheral • Central Lines • Arterial Lines 	Yes Infusion Therapy Management	No	Yes – Limited ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can start IV lines under the supervision of a health care HCP¹ • Can administer medications via peripheral lines – may interrupt IV line, administer and restart at the same rate 	No	No
Phlebotomy	Yes – Immediate or direct supervision not required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capillary blood punctures • Venous • Arterial 	Capillary blood punctures only	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capillary blood punctures only • Venous 	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venous 	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capillary blood punctures • Venous • Arterial invasive procedures under immediate HCP supervision • Line draws if IV fluid is stopped and restarted under immediate HCP supervision

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Standing Orders	Yes – Routine and Non-Complex Standing Orders	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes
Dialysis Procedures	Yes – Routine and Non-complex: No requirements for immediate supervision and no limits to setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemodialysis • Peritoneal Dialysis 	No	No	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to vascular or peritoneal catheter • In renal dialysis or center under immediate RN supervision or in a home if a RN and HCP are available for consultation 	No

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Telemedicine	Yes ² Nursing Telehealth Practice: Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Nursing Technician, and Nursing Assistant	Yes – Limited ² Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care. May perform the following without the HCP present or immediately available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing and maintaining exam & treatment areas • Taking vital signs • Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms • Preparing patient for exam • Instructing patient to collect urine or fecal specimens • Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing 	Yes – Limited ² Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care. May perform the following without the HCP present or immediately available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing and maintaining exam & treatment areas • Taking vital signs • Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms • Preparing patient for exam • Instructing patient to collect urine or fecal specimens • Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing 	Yes – Limited ² Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.	Yes – Limited ² Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
Direction, Delegation and Supervision²	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCP does not need to be on the premises General direction and supervision 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCP does not need to be present during vaccine administration, or when performing diagnostic testing but must be immediately available For other tasks, the HCP must be on the premises <i>Exceptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCP does not need to be present during procedures to withdraw blood, administer vaccines, or obtain specimens for or perform diagnostic testing, but must be immediately available Telemedicine visits² 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP must be on the premises Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available <i>Exceptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCP does not need to be present during procedures to withdraw blood, administer vaccines, or obtain specimens for or perform diagnostic testing, but must be immediately available Telemedicine visits² 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP must be on the premises 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP does not need to be present but must be immediately available for blood draws only

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Health Care Provider (HCP): Directing or Delegating and Supervising²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • ARNP • MD • DO • ND • PA • OD • DPM • DDS • LM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • ARNP • MD • DO • ND • PA • DPM • OD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • ARNP • MD • DO • ND • PA • DPM • OD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • ARNP • MD • DO • ND • PA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • ARNP • MD • DO • ND • PA • DPM • OD

1MA Medication Administration Tables

MA-R Medication Administration Table

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances Schedule III, IV, and V	Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments	Immediate supervision
	Intramuscular	Direct visual supervision
Other Legend Drugs	Topical, eye drops, ointments, and vaccines (oral, intradermal, subcutaneous, and intramuscular)	Immediate supervision

MA-C Medication Administration Table **Prohibited from administering medication through a central intravenous line*

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances Schedule III, IV, and V	Oral, topical, rectal, otic, ophthalmic, or inhaled routes	Immediate supervision
	Subcutaneous, intradermal, intramuscular, or peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision
Other Legend Drugs	All other routes	Immediate supervision
	Peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision

2Definitions: Direction, Supervision, and Delegation

MA Definition:

- Delegation: Direct authorization granted by a health care practitioner (HCP) to a medical assistant to perform the functions authorized in RCW [18.360.050](#) which fall within the HCP's scope of practice and the training and experience of the MA.
- Supervision: Supervision of procedures by a health care practitioner who is physically present and is immediately available in the facility
- Telemedicine supervision: Delivery of direct patient care under supervision by a HCP provided through use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between a MA at the originating site and a HCP off premises. Does not include use of audio-only telephone, FAX or electronic mail.

LPN Definition

- **Direction:** Instructions or orders to provide nursing services or carry out medical regimen under the direction of an authorized health care practitioner.
- **Supervision:** Provision of guidance and evaluation for the accomplishment of a nursing task or activity with the initial direction of the task or activity; periodic inspection of the actual act of accomplishing the task or activity; and the authority to require corrective action.
- **Delegation:** The term delegation does not apply to LPNs. The activity must be within the LPNs SOP already. Transferring the performance of a nursing task (that the person would not normally be allowed to do to competent individuals in selected situations following the delegation process. It must be within the LPN's SOP.
- **Telemedicine supervision:** Delivery of direct patient care under the direction supervision by the HCP provided through use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the LPN at the originating site and the HCP off premises or between the LPN and a patient. Does not include use of audio-only telephone, FAX or electronic mail. The LPN may function as the primary clinical provider within their legal scope of practice under the direction and supervision of an authorized HCP.