



# 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
<b>Nursing Process</b>	Assists the RN in implementing the nursing process	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific
<b>Responsibility and Accountability</b>	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible
<b>Patient and Task Complexity</b>	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
<b>Assessment</b>	Yes – Focused nursing assessments	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vital signs</li> <li>• Observing and reporting</li> </ul>	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vital signs</li> <li>• Observing and reporting</li> </ul>	No	No



## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
<b>Clinical and Nursing Judgment</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>Patient Education</b>	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
<b>Nursing Delegation</b>	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Autoclaving, Sterilizing Equipment and Instruments</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>Aseptic Techniques</b>	Yes – Routine, non-complex in any setting	No	Yes – Routine – Limits – not in a hospital	No	No
<b>Routine Examinations, Procedures and Minor Office Surgeries</b>	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
<b>Preparing and Assisting in Sterile Procedures</b>	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
<b>Oxygen Administration</b>	Yes – Any administration device/method	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or Mask	No



## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

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

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
<b>Medications</b>	<p>Yes – Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By any route</li> <li>Can compound and reconstitute medications</li> <li>Can administer medications from multi-dose vials</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule II-V <a href="#">Administration of Sedating, Analgesic, and Anesthetic Agents</a></li> <li><a href="#">Compounding and Reconstituting Medications</a></li> </ul>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments</li> <li>IM drugs only by unit or single dose verified by HCP</li> <li>Vaccines – PO, ID, SQ, and IM – multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule III-V – Intramuscular injection only by unit or single dose</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup>See MA-R Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>By unit or single dosage or by a dosage calculated and verified by HCP. Multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose.</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances Yes – Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>III-V Scheduled Drugs</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup>See MA-C Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topical or SQ administration of local anesthetics for fistula needle placement</li> <li>Intraperitoneal administration of sterile electrolyte solutions and heparin for peritoneal dialysis</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances – Not allowed May not administer vaccines</p>	No
<b>Blood Products</b>	<p>Yes</p> <p><a href="#">Infusion Therapy Management</a></p>	No	No	No	No

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

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



## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
<b>Standing Orders</b>	Yes – Routine and Non-Complex <a href="#">Standing Orders</a>	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
<b>Dialysis Procedures</b>	Yes – Routine and Non-complex: No requirements for immediate supervision and no limits to setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hemodialysis</li> <li>• Peritoneal Dialysis</li> </ul>	No	No	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to vascular or peritoneal catheter</li> <li>• In renal dialysis or center under immediate RN supervision or in a home if a RN and HCP are available for consultation</li> </ul>	No

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

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

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
<b>Direction, Delegation and Supervision<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCP does not need to be on the premises</li> <li>General direction and supervision</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCP does not need to be present during vaccine administration, or when performing diagnostic testing but must be immediately available</li> <li>For other tasks, the HCP must be on the premises</li> </ul> <p><i>Exceptions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>Telemedicine visits<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct or immediate supervision required</li> <li>HCP must be on the premises</li> <li>Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available</li> </ul> <p><i>Exceptions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>Telemedicine visits<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct or immediate supervision required</li> <li>HCP must be on the premises</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct or immediate supervision required</li> <li>HCP does not need to be present but must be immediately available for blood draws only</li> </ul>





## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P
<b>Health Care Provider (HCP):</b> <b>Directing or Delegating and Supervising<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• OD</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• DDS</li> <li>• LM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>



# Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

## <sup>1</sup>MA Medication Administration Tables

**MA-R Medication Administration Table**

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
<b>Controlled Substances Schedule III, IV, and V</b>	Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments	Immediate supervision
	Intramuscular only by single or unit dose verified by HCP	Direct visual supervision
<b>Other Legend Drugs</b>	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
<b>Controlled Substances Schedule III, IV, and V</b>	Oral, topical, rectal, otic, ophthalmic, or inhaled routes	Immediate supervision
	Subcutaneous, intradermal, intramuscular, or peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision
<b>Other Legend Drugs</b>	All other routes	Immediate supervision
	Peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision

## <sup>2</sup>Definitions: 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.



## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

### 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.