



Title: Nurses Practicing in a Position other than their Nursing Credential or with Dual Credentials
Effective Date: 3/13/2026
Supersedes: Date Unknown
Rescinded:
RN, LPN, NT, and NA: [Nursing Practice Inquiry](#)
ARNP: ARNPPPractice@doh.wa.gov Telephone: 360 236-4703

The Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) issues this advisory opinion in accordance with WAC 246-840-800. An advisory opinion adopted by the WABON is an official opinion about safe nursing practice. The opinion is not legally binding and does not have the force and effect of a duly promulgated regulation or a declaratory ruling by the WABON. Institutional policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations to assure the safety of their patient and/or decrease risk. This advisory opinion does not address state or federal proclamations or rule waivers that temporarily change some regulatory requirements in emergency or disaster situations.

Advisory Opinion: Nurses Practicing in a Position other than their Nursing Credential or with Dual Credentials

Introduction

WABON frequently receives questions about nurses practicing in their role at a level other than their nursing credential or with additional credentials across different professions. This advisory opinion aims to clarify the responsibilities and scope of practice of the registered nurse (RN), licensed practical nurse (LPN), and advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) for the following scenarios:

- Nurse without dual credential practicing in a position/role other than their nursing credential.
- Nurse who holds dual nursing credentials.
- Nurse who holds dual credentials in another profession or discipline.

Definitions/Key Terms

- **Credential:** A license, certification, or registration issued to a person to practice a regulated health care profession. Whether the credential is a license, certification or registration is determined by the law regulating the profession ([WAC 246-12-010](#)).
- **Identification:** The use of a professional title, credential, or role designation in documentation, introductions, or name tags.
- **Dual Credential:** Holding more than one nursing credential or another credential.
- **Scope of Employment:** Limitations or conditions imposed by the employer or facility on the nurse's practice, which cannot exceed the legal scope of practice.
- **Legal Scope of Practice:** The specific activities and responsibilities that Washington state statutes and rules permit a nurse to perform based on their credential.



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Background

Nurses may work in positions/roles other than their nursing credentials in various health care disciplines. For example:

- The LPN may work in a position as a nursing assistant (NA), home care aide (HCA), medical assistant (MA), or surgical technician (ST).
- The RN may work in a role of an LPN, NA, HCA, MA, or ST.
- The ARNP may work in a role of a RN, LPN, NA, HCA, MA, or ST (Note: the ARNP has an RN credential).
- The RN, LPN, or ARNP may hold other health care credentials, such as a Massage Therapist/East Asian Medicine Practitioner, Birth Doula, Midwife, Speech Therapist, Mental Health Counselor, Physical Therapist, Paramedic, or Radiologic Technologist.

Legal Background

The nursing laws and rules ([Chapter 18.79 RCW](#) and [Chapter 246-840 WAC](#)) do not prohibit the RN, LPN, or ARNP from working in roles/positions other than their most advanced licensure or with dual credentials in another profession. However, in working those roles/positions, nurses may only identify themselves (e.g., in documentation, patient introductions, or on a name tag) by a credential or title for which they are properly licensed or credentialed ([RCW 18.79.030](#)).

Regardless of job title, role, or assignment, a nurse is always responsible and accountable for practicing within the scope and standards of their most advanced active license, including all aspects of patient care. Circumstances may arise that require the nurse to provide services beyond their job description but within the scope of their most advanced licensure. Nurses must always follow the standards of nursing conduct and practice. ([WAC 246-840-700](#)).

WABON does not regulate employers or facilities, other healthcare disciplines, or other professions.



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Conclusion and Recommendations

Regardless of the scope of employment, the nurse is required to act as a patient advocate and to provide care that is in the best interest of the patient. Nurses are held to the standard of care expected of a reasonably prudent nurse with comparable education and experience.

The nurse maintains accountability for the standards of practice associated with their credential if they legally represent themselves with that credential, regardless of the role or scope of their current position. A nurse **may not** legally identify themselves as holding a different credential unless they are credentialed in that role.

Nurses must maintain current knowledge of their responsibilities, and safe nursing practices within their scope. When working in roles different from their most advanced license, nurses and employers should:

- Consider the challenges and complexities of the employment arrangement.
- Determine which credential may be used for identification in each role.
- Consider identification of the nurse, such as in medical records documentation, introduction to patients, and name tags.
- Communicate roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities clearly with employers and team members. Employers may restrict tasks but cannot expand a nurse's legal scope of practice or standards.
- Employers should require nurses to disclose their role to health care team when practicing in a position or role about their scope of employment using a different scope of practice than their credential.

References and Resources

[Support for Practicing Nurses | WABON](#)