



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

South Carolina Board of Nursing

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ADVISORY OPINION # 3

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QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of responsibilities of the registered nurse (RN) and licensed practical nurse (LPN) to make pronouncements of death in a health care institution or in the home as a representative of an agency where care is being provided?

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina acknowledges that it is **NOT** within the role and scope of responsibilities of the RN or LPN to make pronouncements of death under state law.

The State Board of Nursing acknowledges that Regulation 61-19 of the Department of Public Health (DPH) speaks to the preparation, signing, and filing of the death certificate, which requires the signature of a physician, medical examiner or coroner to certify death. Although neither the South Carolina Medical Practice Act nor the South Carolina Nurse Practice Act states that pronouncing or declaring death is a medical act which must be performed by a licensed physician, pronouncing or declaring death has consistently been viewed as meaning a function of the person who certifies death.

However, it is within the role and scope of the RN to make an assessment of death utilizing guidelines established by a healthcare institution, home or hospice agency. The RN may assess that a person has died and notify the appropriate persons, including the physician, supervisory personnel, family, and funeral home staff. The State Board of Nursing recommends that institutions/agencies have guidelines in place that address the assessment of death by the RN.

This statement is an advisory opinion of the Board of Nursing as to what constitutes competent and safe nursing practice.