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ADVISORY OPINION #58

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QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of practice for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) to conduct assessments without physician collaboration?

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina recognizes that APRNs receive advanced education and clinical training in health assessment as part of the foundation for APRN practice. The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina recognizes that health assessment is part of the graduate education, a masters or doctoral curriculum, and is required for APRN national certification. The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina also recognizes that assessments are conducted in a variety of settings to promote access to care including hospice, home health, office based, hospitals, mental health, and community organizations.

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina further recognizes that the practice of APRN role includes the practice of registered nursing which includes performing assessments. According to the Nurse Practice Act:

"Practice of registered nursing" means the performance of health care acts in the nursing process that involve assessment, analysis, intervention, and evaluation. This practice requires specialized independent judgment and skill and is based on knowledge and application of the principles of biophysical and social sciences. The practice of registered nursing includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) assessing the health status of persons and groups;
- (b) analyzing the health status of persons and groups

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina further recognizes that traditionally assessments, including the interpretation of diagnostic data, have been conducted as part of the APRN scope of practice and are not considered a delegated act requiring or mandating physician collaboration or protocol.

The Nurse Practice Act stipulates that Additional acts that constitute medical acts must be agreed to jointly by both the Board of Nursing and the Board of Medical Examiners. Medical Acts include medical conditions for which therapies may be initiated, continued, or modified; treatments that may be initiated, continued, or modified; drug therapies that may be prescribed; and situations that require direct evaluation by or referral to the

physician. Medical acts must be performed pursuant to a practice agreement with a physician (s) who is available in person or by telecommunications or by other electronic means to provide consultation and advice to the NP, CNM, or CNS.”

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina, therefore, recognizes that medical acts do not include conducting assessments but may include formulating medical diagnoses and prescribing as defined by the Nurse Practice Act.

This statement is an advisory opinion of the State Board of Nursing for South Carolina as to what constitutes competent and safe Advanced Practice Registered Nurse practice.