

CAMP NURSING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IN 2023



The transition of spring to summer brings an increase in both the average daily temperature and in the droves of campers heading off to private camps, faith-based camps, special-needs camps, sports camps, and not-for-profit camps. This transition also brings an increase in the number of questions received by Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) staff regarding scope of nursing practice in the camp setting. Frequently asked questions include: “Can I give shots at camp?” and “What are nursing documentation requirements in the camp setting?”

While Oregon’s Nurse Practice Act (NPA) describes the requirements of the individual nurse in their practice of nursing, the act contains no camp nursing-specific standards. The good news is that there exist multiple resources beyond the NPA which ultimately inform the services provided by the camp nurse. This article will address NPA requirements, professional practice resources and some key considerations for the nurse who is considering a camp nursing practice position.

Oregon's Nurse Practice Act Oregon Licensure

One must be licensed as an Oregon nurse to practice nursing with a client located in the state of Oregon. This same legal requirement applies to the nurse who practices in the camp setting.

There do exist exceptions to this law. The first exception applies to the nurse who is licensed in good standing in another state and they practice in an institution or agency of the federal government. The second exception applies for the nurse who is licensed in good standing in another state, is affiliated with an out-of-state school that is running the camp event in Oregon, and the campers are students at the school.

These licensure requirements and exceptions apply to both paid and volunteer practice and are found in Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 678.021 and 678.031.

License Type

The role of the camp nurse requires independent nursing assessment and planning. As such, the practice role warrants registered nurse (RN) licensure.

There is nothing in the NPA that prohibits the licensed practical nurse (LPN) from practicing in the camp setting. However, to do so legally the LPN's practice must occur under the clinical direction of an RN or licensed independent practitioner (LIP), such as a physician (MD) or nurse practitioner (NP). Clinical direction of the LPN's practice comes from the RN's or LIP's plan of care for the camper(s).

This also means that if a camper were to present to the LPN for an issue or problem outside of the RN's or LIP's established plan, the LPN would collect data regarding the problem and then communicate said data with the RN or LIP for direction. There is no authority for the LPN to conduct an independent assessment outside of the parameters of an established plan of care.

Practice of Nursing

Under the requirements of the NPA, the practice of nursing for the RN is the collection and evaluation of data to identify their client's overall response to their current state of health. Through this assessment process, the RN develops reasoned conclusions that identify problems or risks presented by the client and develops a plan of care based on analysis of the client's problems or risks. The RN's plan of care identifies measurable outcomes and includes nursing interventions to address prioritized reasoned conclusions.

Under the requirements of the NPA, the practice of nursing for the LPN occurs as the LPN carries out RN or LIP plan of care interventions for their client. The LPN recognizes the client's

priority condition at the time of their interaction—this is the LPN's focused assessment. From the focused assessment, the LPN prioritizes the established interventions (from the RN's or LIP's plan of care)—this is the LPN's focused plan of care. The LPN is always responsible to communicate any concerns or issues with the plan's implementation to the RN or LIP.

The bottom line is that the LPN license grants (or limits) its owner the scope of practice authority to perform a focused assessment and develop a focused plan of care only. Both scope of practice authorities must remain within the parameters of the RN's or LIP's plan of care.

Another requirement with the practice of nursing is that nurses only accept those assignments for which they possess the current knowledge, skills, and ability to perform with skill and safety. This decision requires the Individual nurse to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation to determine whether accepting or declining a camp nursing role is the prudent course of action.

As the NPA does not contain camp nursing-specific practice standards, camp nursing competencies, or identify camp nursing job duties, it is here where the nurse looks beyond the NPA to locate the information needed to complete the self-reflection and evaluation process.

Beyond the Nurse Practice Act Position Description

The camp nurse position description is a sound place to start this reflective process. The position description should describe the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of the camp nurse position.

Typically, responsibilities of the camp RN include preventative, routine, and emergency care for both campers and staff; the administration of medications to campers; and, providing education for campers and staff on preventive health issues, communicable diseases, heat-related illness, and/or emergency response preparedness at the camp location.

The position description for a camp LPN should identify the position of camp RN, NP, or MD to be providing clinical direction of LPN practice. This is because without a camp RN, NP, or MD, clinical direction for LPN practice does not exist whereby there would be no legal authority for the LPN to engage in the practice of nursing.

Camp Nursing Practice Standards and Competencies

With the major responsibilities of the camp nurse position known, the next step in the nurse's self-reflection and evaluation process is to identify camp nursing-specific practice standards and practice competencies necessary to safely meet to responsibilities of the camp nurse position.

continued on page 8 >>

<< continued from page 7

Information on specialty nursing practice standards and practice competencies may be found with a professional nursing organization that specializes in camp nursing. Broadly speaking, professional nursing organizations serve their membership (and the public) through activities such as defining their specialty nursing practice area and setting specialty nursing scope of practice standards based on the collective knowledge of their membership, and current science and literature.

The nurse who is considering a position as a camp nurse should look to a specialty nursing practice organization such as The Alliance for Camp Health (ACH). The ACH has published multiple resources for the camp nurse including Scope and Standards of Camp Nursing Practice 3rd ed. (2017) and an online journal covering topics pertinent to camp nursing. The ACH also provides on-line continuing education specific to camp nursing.

Additionally, the ACH website <https://allianceforcamphealth.org> provides links to other camp-related resources and to organizations such as the American Camp Association (ACA). The ACA also publishes resources for camp staff and publishes camp standards. While not all camps are members of or certified by the ACA, the organization's published camp standards serve as a measure of quality to which camp services may be evaluated and measured. A large number of the published camp standards are directly related to the health and safety of campers/staff which can inform camp nursing services delivery and policy development. Their website is www.acacamps.org

Camper Demographics

The prudent camp nurse possesses knowledge, skills, and practice competencies pertinent to the demographics of camp participants. For example, in a camp for children

with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), the camp nurse should possess current knowledge about the developmental stage of the campers, their presenting conditions, and possess competencies with I/DD nursing practice.

This means the nurse who is considering a camp nursing position must evaluate their own nursing practice competencies against those identified for camp nursing and the demographics of campers.

Safe Practice Considerations

Before starting a position, the camp nurse should have a clear understanding of the policies that are related to the responsibilities of the camp nurse position. Such policy content may include preventative, routine, and emergency care of camp participants; the administration of medications; teaching and health promotion activities; and emergency response preparedness.

If no such policies exist and the position is accepted, the first responsibility of the camp nurse will be to develop them. If such policies exist but are not consistent with the requirements of the NPA, professional camp nurse standards, and/or Oregon Administrative rules chapter 333 Division 30 Organizational Camp Rules (that may or may not apply to the specific camp), the camp nurse should be prepared to amend the policies.

In closing, be mindful that beyond Oregon's legal scope of practice standards exists those factors that inform the role of the camp nurse. The nurse who accepts a camp nursing position holds the responsibility to self-regulate their actions in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the NPA, consistent with current professional practice standards, and that protects the health and safety of camp participants.

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