



CALIFORNIA
NURSES
ASSOCIATION



NATIONAL NURSES
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Nursing Practice & Patient Advocacy Alert

SUPERVISOR COMPETENCY

QUESTION: Can a supervisor evaluate another nurse on a certain skill if s/he does not have documented competency for that skill? Secondly, can a supervisor step in and relieve a staff nurse in an area that s/he does not have competency?

RESPONSE: The Nursing Practice Act, Title 16 and Title 22 all address competency issues. According to Title 22, all nurses caring for patients in particular unit, must have demonstrated and documented competencies specific to that unit before being assigned total responsibility for patients. In addition, the RN who is responsible for the nursing care on the unit (i.e. the supervisor) must also have validated competencies for the entire unit. Therefore, a supervisor must have validated competencies in order to provide care for patients on a unit, or to assign other personnel to care for that group of patients. If a supervisor does not have validated competencies specific to a unit, s/he cannot participate in those areas of patient care, nor be responsible for assigning other staff to do that care. In other words, a supervisor cannot supervise and evaluate the performance of other nursing personnel in a unit where her competency has not been validated for all of the unit standards.

Additionally, the BRN states that only a RN can evaluate another RN's ability to perform the nursing process. Therefore, RN competence can only be evaluated by another RN.

If you have further questions, need more information or help please call CNA's Nursing Practice Program at 510/273-2200.

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