

ACHA Guidelines

Scope of Practice for the Licensed Practical Nurse in College Health

Introduction and Guiding Principles

The American College Health Association (ACHA) supports and recognizes the need for hiring well-qualified college health nurses to provide cost-effective nursing care and services within institutions of higher education.

Nursing Practice

ACHA embraces the following description and expectations for nursing as set forth by the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN):

The ANA describes nursing as “the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations” (n.d.-a).

The licensed practical nurse is any person licensed to practice practical nursing. Most state statutes define practical nursing as the performance of selected acts, including the administration of treatments and medications, promotion of wellness, maintenance of health, and prevention of illness of others under the direction of a registered nurse, a licensed physician, a licensed osteopathic physician, a licensed podiatric physician, or a licensed dentist.

Both registered nurses (RNs) and LPNs work autonomously within their scope of practice and level of competence and as part of a collaborative team to support safe, competent care for patients. All nursing personnel must hold a current license to practice within their state. All health care personnel should also hold a current CPR certification within their state as well. In general, LPNs are responsible for assisting RNs and providers by providing nursing care to their patients per individual state statutes.

Some of the typical job duties performed by LPNs include:

- Recording the patient’s health history
- Administering intramuscular, oral, rectal, and topical medications (administering IV medications requires certification in some states)
- Performing physical assessments and measuring and documenting vital signs such as blood pressure, temperature, height, weight, pulse, and oxygen saturation
- Performing wound care including cleaning and bandaging injured areas
- Providing immunizations
- Providing patient education
- Monitoring fluid/food intake and output
- Transferring patients safely
- Collecting and performing lab testing including point of care testing
- Obtaining an EKG
- Triaging patient reactions to medications, IV sites, and nasogastric and gastrostomy tubes to identify early signs of complication and/or infections
- Observing patient mental health status
- Promoting health, focusing on exercise and nutrition, stress management, mental health and well-being (including depression and anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, and tobacco use)
- Providing emotional support to patients
- Working within the guidelines of policy and procedure requirements, such as health and safety, risk management, and equality and diversity, written by the nurse’s employer

LPN vs LVN

These two licensed nursing titles are the same. As used in the United States, the title LPN (licensed practical nurse) and LVN (licensed vocational nurse) describe the same position. Other than the state in which each of the terms is used, there are no other significant differences to these two titles and their scope of practice. The term LPN is used in 48 states; LVN is used only in the states of California and Texas.

To obtain the LPN or LVN designation, one must complete a 12-month educational and hands-on supervised clinical program, receiving a diploma at either a vocational school or local community college. Both LPN and LVN students receive classes in nursing, pharmacology, and biology and are required to pass the NCLEX-PN to obtain their license from the board of nursing.

The ANA (n.d.-b) lists the following stages of the nursing process:

Assessment:

The licensed practical/vocational nurse (LPN/LVN) is a highly valuable and integrated member of the medical care team. By partnering with RNs or providers, the LPN/LVN can perform a wide range of patient-care duties in many clinical settings. While the RN has a wider scope of practice and is responsible for more comprehensive patient assessments and duties, the LPN/LVN is qualified to conduct focused assessments to determine the health status of patients. The LPN is not to perform a comprehensive nursing assessment due to it being outside of their scope of practice.

Diagnosis:

LPNs cannot diagnose any medical condition or prescribe any medication. However, they can handle most of the routine tasks of day-to-day medical care.

Outcomes/Planning:

Based on the assessment and diagnosis, the nurse sets measurable and achievable short- and long-range goals for the patient. Assessment data, diagnosis, and goals are written in the patient's chart so that nurses as well as other health professionals caring for the patient have access to the information. Each problem is assigned a clear, measurable goal for the expected beneficial outcome.

Implementation:

The implementing phase is where the nurse determines interventions that were created to help meet the goals for the patient. This plan is specific to each patient and focuses on achievable outcomes. These tasks can be delegated to other persons who have been involved in the care of the patient.

Evaluation:

Once all nursing interventions have taken place, the nurse completes an evaluation to determine if the goals for patient have been met. The nurse bases (concludes) this evaluation by measuring whether the patient's condition has improved, is stabilized, or has worsened. In the event the condition of the patient has shown no improvement, or if the wellness goals were not met, the nursing process must be revised for the wellness of the patient. The LPN/LVN, in collaboration with the RN or provider, assists in adjusting the plan of care. The LPN/LVN is responsible for assessing, documenting, and communicating this process in a timely manner to ensure the patients' progress.

Documentation:

The LPN/LVN is individually accountable and responsible for the care the LPN/LVN provides. The nurse is required to document in patient records the nursing care given and the patient's response to the care provided. LPNs are accountable for documenting accurately, honestly, respectfully, and consistently under the principles, standards, practices, and laws.

College Health LPN/LVN Standards of Practice

Standard 1: Education

Knowledge:

- Acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to practice in college health.
- Seek and participate in ongoing educational opportunities related to clinical knowledge and enhancing professional skills.
- Understand health care systems.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Apply the nursing process.
- Execute ethical principles in decision making.
- Integrate evidence supported information and methodologies into current practice.

- Apply codes and standards of professional practice as established in the nurse practice acts for the states in which the LPN/LVN practices.
- Understand and comply with licensure laws for the state in which the LPN/LVN practices.

Standard 2: Nursing Process

Knowledge:

- Proficient and competent clinical skills are essential in providing optimal care.

Skills/Abilities/Proficiencies

- Critical thinking is used throughout all components of the nursing process. The RN or LPN uses critical thinking in clinical problem solving and decision making within their scope of practice. Critical thinking involves analyzing and interpreting a problem by using reasoning to find solutions and apply them in the evaluation by the LPN. This leads to safe, skillful nursing interventions and positive outcomes in the care of patients.
- Effective decision-making skills are one of the most important skills to have as an LPN. LPNs must have excellent decision-making skills to perform the necessary procedures quickly and effectively, especially in the case of an emergency. The ability to work under pressure is crucial and indispensable.
- Time management is a very important skill to have as an LPN. Efficacy management can help ensure that all patients receive the care they need in the manner that is most beneficial.

Standard 3: Collegiality

Knowledge:

- Understand the nurse practice act for the state in which the LPN/LVN practices.
- Identify patient rights and responsibilities in the current practice location.
- Understand the patient advocate role.
- Understand current HIPAA and FERPA requirements.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Initiate relationships with the individual patient (including the patient's significant other or support system, if necessary), other members of the campus community, and health care providers to provide college health services which demonstrate and support learning outcomes.

Standard 4: Ethics

Knowledge:

- Understand current state of nursing practice's Nurse Practice Standards.
- List the current, relevant nursing practice laws and regulations for the state in which the LPN/LVN practices.
- Review administrative and departmental policies and procedures which govern nursing practice in the state in which the LPN/LVN practices.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Perform self-evaluation of one's own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards and relevant laws and regulations.
- Perform frequent self-evaluation of one's own nursing practice in relation to ethics.
- Provide nursing services in an organized manner to meet the existing needs and identify the future needs of the individual.
- Provide care and support of patient's decisions in an ethical manner.

Standard 5: Collaboration

Knowledge:

- List other departments on campus.
- Work with a team of providers, nurses, and clerical staff.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Identify opportunities to collaborate with other departments within the university.
- Collaborate with community members to plan, assess, identify outcomes, implement, and evaluate college health services and community health services when applicable.

Standard 6: Professional Practice Evaluation

Knowledge:

- Understand the nursing standards, laws, and regulations of the state in which the LPN/LVN practices.
- Review expectations set forth by the current practice location.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Identify strengths and areas for professional and personal growth.
- Create professional goals which may be based on evaluation by their supervisor.
- Utilize learning outcomes.
- Utilize constructive feedback for positive development.

Standard 7: Resource Utilization and Leadership

Knowledge:

- List interpersonal communication skills and available classes/courses that can help to develop these skills.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Describe the organizational chart at the current practice location.

Standard 8: Communication

Knowledge:

- Understand active communication skills.

Skills and Abilities/Proficiencies:

- Communication skills are a necessity when it comes to performing well as an LPN/LVN.
- LPNs work closely with patients and their families, as well as with doctors, nurses, and other members of the health care team, and being able to effectively relay information about the needs and condition of a patient is a vital part of ensuring optimal care.
- Clear and concise verbiage is as essential as the treatments offered.
- Empathy is essential when relating to patients.

References

American Nurses Association. (n.d.-a). What is nursing? <http://www.nursingworld.org/EspeciallyForYou/What-isNursing>

American Nurses Association. (n.d.-b). The Nursing Process. <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/workforce/what-is-nursing/the-nursing-process/>

Resources

ACHA Guidelines: Scope of Practice for the Registered Nurse in College Health. Available at <https://www.acha.org/Guidelines>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (NCSBN) Scope of Practice Decision-Making Framework <https://www.ncsbn.org/nursing-regulation/practice/decision-making-framework.page>

