

Scope of Practice - Nurse Practitioners

Issue Background

In recent years ancillary health care providers have sought to expand their scope of practice from changes to their medical supervisory arrangements to being granted prescriptive authority or to being granted licensure or independent practice. One such group is the nurse practitioners (NPs).

Currently NPs are licensed by a Joint Board of Medicine and Nursing. NPs practice under the medical supervision of a physician. The physician and NP develop a written practice agreement that outlines what the NP can do when seeing patients based on the NP's skills and training. Since most NPs have prescriptive authority, physician involvement in overseeing their practice is warranted.

NPs have expressed a desire to transfer licensure authority to the Board of Nursing alone. NPs have also indicated an interest in eliminating the requirement that they practice under the supervision of a physician moving toward a type of independent practice they have labeled collaboration.

MSV Talking Points

- » MSV understands the valuable role nurse practitioners play in providing needed health care services, however, Virginia physicians strongly support the continued supervisory relationship physicians have with NPs set forth in a written practice agreement.
- » MSV strongly opposes independent practice for nurse practitioners (or what the NPs call “collaborative practice”).
- » While NPs receive post-graduate level education, the education and training they undergo is not comparable to the education and years of supervised training a physician receives before practicing independently.

For more information, contact the Medical Society of Virginia's government affairs department by phone at 804 | 343-1185, or visit the MSV Web site, www.msv.org/legislative.

