



Assistants in nursing providing aspects of nursing care

The role of the assistant in nursing* is to assist registered nurses and enrolled nurses in the delivery of delegated aspects of nursing care. The purpose of this position statement is to clarify the registered nurses' and enrolled nurses' roles when working with assistants in nursing in the delivery of nursing care; and to guide registered nurses and employers in making decisions about the use of assistants in nursing; and in making decisions about delegation, supervision, responsibility and accountability in the delivery of nursing care.

This position statement should be read in conjunction with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) policies, position statements and guidelines listed below, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Decision Making Frameworks and applicable industrial instruments and legislation. Where the assistant in nursing is an undergraduate student of nursing or midwifery, the ANMF position statement on employment of undergraduate students of nursing or midwifery should be used instead of this position statement.

The ANMF is committed to the provision of safe nursing and midwifery care and to ensuring safe practice for workers providing that care. To this end the ANMF considers that assistants in nursing should be regulated and governed under the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Professional Practice Framework.

Nurses and midwives require a high level of complex knowledge, skills and behaviours, cognitive abilities and demonstrated competence in order to maximise health outcomes for the persons to whom they provide care across a variety of settings. Nursing and midwifery is equally relevant whether provided in health care and residential facilities, private homes, communities, schools, worksites, general practice or other locations.

Assistants in nursing assist nurses in the provision of delegated aspects of nursing care where clinically appropriate. All aspects of nursing care undertaken by assistants in nursing are determined, delegated and supervised by a registered nurse. Supervision may be direct or indirect¹.

In accordance with the NMBA *Enrolled nurse standards for practice*, enrolled nurses provide support and supervision under the guidance of the registered nurse to assistants in nursing to ensure care is provided as outlined within the plan of care and according to institutional policies, protocols and guidelines.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. Registered nurses are responsible for assessing and providing the nursing care needs of any person who require assistance managing their own care needs.
2. Registered nurses plan nursing care and deliver or delegate aspects of that care, with input from other registered nurses, enrolled nurses, assistants in nursing, the people for whom they provide care and their families.
3. Registered nurses are responsible for the ongoing assessment of nursing care needs of the people for whom they provide care and the delegation of nursing activities.
4. Activities delegated by registered nurses to, and undertaken by, assistants in nursing are determined by registered nurses having regard to:
 - a) the person's health status (acuity, stability and complexity);
 - b) the degree of educational preparation of the assistant in nursing;
 - c) level of knowledge, confidence, skills and experience of the person to whom the nursing activity has been delegated;
 - d) the demonstrated competence of the assistant in nursing;
 - e) complexity of the delegated activity;
 - f) professional standards relevant to delegating care to assistants in nursing;

*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)



- g) the context in which care is to be provided;
 - h) the level of supervision and support required by the assistant in nursing;
 - i) the expected outcomes of the delegated nursing activity;
 - j) evaluation, monitoring and communication of outcomes; and
 - k) legislative requirements.
5. Registered nurses should be involved in formal and informal education and training of assistants in nursing in the workplace and should be provided with appropriate education to undertake clinical assessment.
 6. The assistant in nursing assists registered nurses and enrolled nurses in the provision of delegated aspects of nursing care within the limits specified by their education, training and experience. At all times, assistants in nursing work within a plan of nursing care developed by the registered nurse, and work under the supervision and direction of a registered nurse and, where deemed appropriate by the registered nurse, an enrolled nurse. This supervision may be direct or indirect.
 7. Assistants in nursing are accountable to the registered nurse for all delegated functions.
 8. The educational preparation of assistants in nursing should:
 - a) be nationally consistent,
 - b) be standards based,
 - c) recognise prior learning and experience,
 - d) be conducted in the vocational education sector at a level appropriate to facilitate articulation and credit transfer to other nursing or midwifery programs.
 9. The minimum education preparation for assistants in nursing should be a nationally agreed and recognised Certificate III qualification relevant to their area of practice.
 10. Clinical placement of assistants in nursing during their Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate III qualification should be undertaken in the contexts in which they may be employed as assistants in nursing.
 11. During clinical placements, assistants in nursing must work within the nursing care plan and be under the direct supervision of a registered nurse.
 12. Continuing education should be available for assistants in nursing, with equitable access to study leave provisions.
 13. Employers are responsible for ensuring that all employees are safe and competent to practice in the scope of practice or role for which they have been employed, and have appropriate local policies underpinning their scope of practice or role. For employees who are nurses, midwives or assistants in nursing, these policies should be based on the employee having successfully completed accredited education and training.
 14. Employers are responsible for ensuring that work is carried out within the parameters of appropriate legislation and regulation regarding the delegation of nursing activities.
 15. Employers have a responsibility to provide resources and infrastructure for the continuing professional development of all staff involved in the delivery of care.

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ANMF Position Statement

References

1. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2020. Decision-making framework for nursing and midwifery. Melbourne. Available at: <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx>

The definitions of direct and indirect supervision are as follows:

Direct supervision: the registered nurse or midwife supervising takes direct and principal responsibility for the nursing or midwifery care provided (for example: assessment and/or treatment of individual patients/clients).

Indirect supervision: the registered nurse or midwife supervising and the supervisee share the responsibility for individual patients. The supervisor is easily contactable and is available to observe and discuss the nursing or midwifery care the supervisee is delivering.

This position statement should be read in conjunction with the ANMF Assistants in Nursing Policy, the ANMF Professional practice framework for nurses and midwives Position Statement and the ANMF Delegation by Registered Nurses Guideline.