

Louisiana State Board of Nursing

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This letter was sent to: All Hospital Administrators in Louisiana

This is to communicate to you the position of the Board of Nursing relative to the legal right of the C.R.N.A. to administer regional anesthesia. This letter will also provide you background information which supports the Board's position, originally adopted in 1981 and subsequently reaffirmed twice, with the latest reaffirmation occurring in September, 1984.

In 1981, in preparation for the Board's deliberation on this matter, the fifty-two registered nurse licensing Boards were surveyed to determine statutory and regulatory provisions regarding the administration of regional anesthesia by the C.R.N.A. Neither statutory nor regulatory preclusion was found in the forty-two jurisdictions which responded to the survey.

Studies of the nurse anesthesia education programs reveal increasing numbers of these programs teaching the actual administration of regional anesthesia. In 1983, 78% of the anesthesia schools taught I.V. regionals, 60.9% taught spinals, 55.1% taught axillaries and 46.6% taught epidurals. These percentages reflect increases of 25% - 42% since 1977.

On August 12, 1983, the Board of Nursing gave testimony relative to its position at a public hearing regarding the administration of regional anesthesia by C.R.N.A., which hearing was held by the Board of Medical Examiners. A preponderance of the testimonies given at the hearing supported the Board of Nursing's opinion in the matter.

The Board of Nursing recognizes that the Board of Medical Examiners, by statute, can state what it believes to be the practice of medicine. However, the Board of Nursing, by statute, can state what it believes to be within the realm of the practice of nursing.

The Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (C.R.N.A.) practice under the authority of the Nurse Practice Act, L.R.S. 37:911 et seq., and particularly L.R.S. 37:930. Further, L.R.S. 37:1291 (3) specifically exempts "Practitioners of allied health fields, duly licensed, certified, or registered under other laws of this state" from the provisions of the Medical Practice Act. C.R.N.A. are under the jurisdiction of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, not the Board of Medical Examiners.

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Statutorily, the C.R.N.A. is required to have completed a basic nursing education program, to be licensed to practice as a registered nurse, to have completed an educational program in a school of anesthesia, to have successfully completed the certification examination given by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and to meet ongoing continuing education requirements in order to maintain said certification.

The Board of Nursing has received no communication regarding the matter from the Board of Medical Examiners since the August, 1983 hearing. However, copies of communications received from the Board of Medical Examiners by other parties have been forwarded to the Board of Nursing. These parties requested the Board of Nursing to clarify the position of the C.R.N.A. who administers regional anesthesia. Hence the reaffirmation of the Board of Nursing's opinion, which is as follows:

Nothing in the Nurse Practice Act prohibits the administration of regional anesthesia by registered nurses who meet the requirements of R.S. 37:930. Therefore, it is not illegal for a C.R.N.A. who meets the requirements of R.S. 37:930 to administer regional anesthesia provided that this individual has been appropriately prepared in the actual administration of such anesthesia.

The Board of Nursing trusts that this communication will provide you with the information you need to understand that C.R.N.A. licensed by this Board have the legal right to administer anesthesia under the direction and supervision of a licensed physician or dentist, and that this authority includes all types of anesthesia which the C.R.N.A. are qualified to administer.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call.

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF NURSING

by 
Merlyn M. Maillian, R.N.
Executive Director

cc: Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners
Louisiana Association of Nurse Anesthetists
Louisiana State Nurses' Association