



## Position Statement: Independent Practice

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) licensed as independent practitioners who plan and deliver anesthesia, pain management, and related care to patients of all health complexities across the lifespan. As autonomous healthcare professionals, CRNAs collaborate with the patient and a variety of healthcare professionals in order to provide patient-centered high-quality, holistic, evidence-based and cost-effective care.

The practice of anesthesia has been a recognized nursing specialty for more than 100 years. State laws, rules and regulations, and court opinions recognize that healthcare professionals share overlapping areas and activities. Anesthesia is the practice of nursing when performed by nurse anesthetists and the practice of medicine when performed by physicians.<sup>1,2,3</sup> There is no defining line between the professions.<sup>1,3</sup>

CRNAs practice in hospitals, nonoperating room anesthetizing areas, ambulatory surgical centers, and office-based settings. They provide all types of anesthesia-related care for surgical, diagnostic, and therapeutic procedures. CRNAs provide anesthesia for all specialties including, but not limited to, general, obstetric, trauma, cardiac, orthopedic, gastrointestinal, dental, and plastic surgery. CRNAs administer anesthesia care to patients in urban, suburban, and rural locations in the U.S., and are often the sole anesthesia professionals delivering care to the military, rural, and medically underserved populations. CRNAs serve as leaders, clinicians, researchers, educators, mentors, advocates, and administrators.

CRNAs exercise independent, professional judgment within their scope of practice. They are accountable for their services and actions and for maintaining individual clinical competence. The scope of an individual CRNA's practice is determined by education, experience, local, state and federal law, and organization policy.

In order for CRNAs to continue to produce high-quality, cost-effective care in the ever changing healthcare environment, as is demonstrated in the literature, the New Hampshire Association of Nurse Anesthesiology advocates for CRNA independent practice and/or a collaborative anesthesia model of care where each CRNA and physician anesthesiologist is practicing independently to the full extent of their education and training.

## References

1. *Sermchief v. Gonzalez*, 660 S.W.2d 683, 688 (Mo. 1983). (The Supreme Court of Missouri refused to draw "the thin and elusive" line separating the practice of medicine and the practice of nursing and determined that services performed by professional

nurses were within the scope of professional nursing and were not the unauthorized practice of medicine.)

2. American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology. *Legal Issues in Nurse Anesthesia Practice*. Park Ridge, IL. 2010.
3. Blumenreich GA. The overlap between the practice of medicine and the practice of nursing. *AANA J*. Feb 1998;66(1):11-15.