

**RECOGNITION OF A NURSING SPECIALTY,
APPROVAL OF A SPECIALTY NURSING
SCOPE OF PRACTICE STATEMENT,
AND
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPECIALTY NURSING
STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**



Approved by the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics

September 2010

Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics 2010-2012, 2010-2014

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Revised and Approved in September 2010

Originally developed in 1998 by the American Nurses Association Congress of Nursing Practice and the Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines in collaboration with members of the ANA Nursing Organizations Liaison Forum (NOLF). Revised and approved by the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics in September 2005, September 2008, September 2010.

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BUILDING QUALITY NURSING PRACTICE

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations and its specialty nursing and workforce advocacy organizations that currently connect to ANA as affiliates. The ANA advances the nursing profession by facilitating development of the standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on healthcare issues affecting nurses and the public. The ANA in such a leadership role must address the assurance of quality in the clinical, administrative, education, and research domains of nursing practice.

FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCES FOR NURSING PRACTICE

Three documents establish the foundation and create the framework for all nursing practice within the global domains of practice, education, administration, and research, as well as in more discrete areas of specialty practice. *Nursing's Social Policy Statement: The Essence of the Profession* (ANA, 2010b), describes professional nursing's accountability to the public and identifies the processes of self-regulation, professional regulation, and legal regulation as mechanisms to maintain public trust.

A second resource, the *Code of Ethics for Nurses With Interpretive Statements* (ANA, 2001) provides significant guidance for all nurses and their nursing practice in every setting.

The third foundational document, *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* (ANA, 2010a), presents more detail in further defining the scope and standards of practice for all registered nurses, including the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). It describes what nursing is, what nurses do, and those responsibilities for which nurses are accountable. The scope and standards of nursing practice are highly valued by registered nurses nationally and internationally and are regularly referenced by those engaged in legal, regulatory, administrative, educational, and research activities. The scope and standards of nursing practice language serves also as a template for a nursing specialty when delineating the details and complexity of that specialty.

OTHER BUILDING BLOCKS

The applicable state nurse practice act and regulatory language, accompanied by the interpretation of those directives by the responsible legal and regulatory bodies, provide further guidance to the registered nurse in identifying the components of quality nursing practice. Similarly, institutional policies and procedures establish other parameters that guide nursing practice. "Finally, the registered nurse, using skills, knowledge, and professional judgment, ultimately determines what is appropriate nursing practice based on the scope of practice, standards of practice, nurse practice acts, legal regulations,

and institutional policies and procedures” (Styles, Schumann, Bickford, & White, 2008). The expected outcome is safe, quality, and evidence-based practice. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model of Professional Nursing Practice Regulation



HISTORY OF ANA’S RECOGNITION PROGRAM FOR SPECIALTY PRACTICE

As the ANA’s organizational structure evolved and specialty practice interests expanded, increasing numbers of specialty nursing organizations emerged to provide pertinent specialty focused continuing education and professional resources. The specialty nursing organizations also created specialty practice standards and guidelines to describe a distinct focus of practice which in turn resulted in significant diversity in format and content. The rapidly changing healthcare environment’s demands, including the call for certification of nurses for specialty practice, created the need to develop consistent, standardized processes for recognizing specialty areas of nursing practice, approving specialty nursing scope of practice statements, and acknowledging specialty nursing standards of practice.

During the late 1990’s the ANA convened representatives from various specialty nursing groups to address the need for consistency in standards of practice and to identify a formal mechanism to confirm professional recognition of specialty practice. This resulted in the ANA Congress of Nursing Practice, now known as the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics (CNPE), becoming the reviewing body of specialty nursing standards of practice.

The ANA continues to provide these services to the profession. The CNPE has the designated oversight responsibility for developing and maintaining the scope and

standards of practice. The CNPE's Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines assists in this work. The members of this committee identify issues, serve as the first reviewers of specialty nursing organization scope and standards documents, make recommendations to the CNPE, provide consulting assistance, and coordinate and manage the ANA practice standards program under the direction of the CNPE. The CNPE and the Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines rely on the *Code of Ethics for Nurses With Interpretive Statements* (ANA, 2001), *Nursing's Social Policy Statement: The Essence of the Profession* (ANA, 2010b), and *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* (ANA, 2010a) to inform their decisions.

The *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition*, serves as a template for a nursing specialty when describing the details and complexity of that practice.

Because of the significant changes in the evolving healthcare and nursing practice environments, the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics continues to reaffirm the earlier Congress of Nursing Practice decision that specialty nursing standards must be reviewed, revised as necessary, and resubmitted for acknowledgment at least every five years, or more frequently if warranted. Therefore, ANA's approval of the scope of practice and acknowledgement of the standards of practice remains valid for five years starting from the date of publication. If a revised document is not brought forward for ANA's consideration prior to the end of the five year timeframe, then ANA's endorsement is no longer valid.

Because the context of specialty practice should not be separated from the standards of practice, the Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines requires that specialty nursing organizations forward an updated specialty scope of practice statement for review and approval with each standards revision. Completing the review process before publication will allow inclusion of the appropriate announcement about ANA's approval of the scope of practice and acknowledgment of the standards of practice in the final document. The following sections provide specific details and guidance about the ANA's process for recognition of a nursing specialty, approval of a specialty nursing scope of practice statement, and acknowledgment of specialty nursing standards of practice.

PROCESS FOR RECOGNITION OF A NURSING SPECIALTY, APPROVAL OF SCOPE STATEMENTS, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PRACTICE STANDARDS

ANA is pleased to assist specialty nursing organizations as they explore their interest in recognition of a nursing specialty, complete their assessment of readiness to be formally recognized as a specialty practice, or pursue approval of a scope of practice statement and acknowledgment of specialty practice standards. The development of a specialty nursing scope and standards document normally takes from 12 to 24 months. Interested nursing groups can expect that the review and pre-publication processes include some or all of these activities:

1. The interested specialty nursing organization (SNO) contacts ANA in writing to express its interest in gaining formal recognition of a nursing specialty, approval of a scope of practice statement, and acknowledgment of specialty practice standards. The notification of interest should include the name and contact information of the SNO's contact person who will serve as a resource to ANA throughout the process. Notification of Interest should be sent to the Director of Nursing Practice and Policy.
2. The SNO should also notify ANA of its intention to self-publish or to utilize ANA's publication department, Nursebooks.org. Publication services are free of charge. Organizations that intend to publish through ANA will be required to enter into a publication agreement. Self-publishing organizations should refer to the guidelines for self-publishing organizations in Appendix B.
3. After receiving the SNO's notification of interest in requesting recognition of a specialty, approval of a scope statement, and standards acknowledgment, ANA sends a copy of *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* (ANA, 2010a) and other materials explaining the process and criteria for recognition, approval, and acknowledgment to the contact person.
4. The SNO establishes a workgroup to create the new or revise the existing specialty nursing scope and standards of practice. The SNO should consider the requirements set forth in Appendix A when creating the workgroup.
5. The SNO develops the specialty scope and standards document. This process must include opportunities for member input and public comment, as well as a defined leadership team or board of directors' approval mechanism.
6. The SNO submits the unpublished specialty scope and standards document for ANA review.
7. The ANA Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines (Committee) reviews the submission against established review criteria that have been approved by the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics. (See pages 13-14, 16-17). The Committee provides written recommendations to the SNO if the document does not meet the established review criteria. The Committee members and designated ANA support staff are available to assist the SNO in resolving discrepancies in content and

format in preparation for re-submission for a second review.

8. When the submission meets the established review criteria, the Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines forwards its recommendations to the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics (CNPE) for review and action. The CNPE may take one of the following actions:

- RECOMMEND recognition of the specialty, approval of the scope and acknowledgment of the standards, with or without CNPE revisions
- RETURN the document to the Committee for further revision

If the CNPE returns the submission to the Committee, the CNPE will identify the unmet criteria and request additional information or changes in the document. After revisions have been made to address all identified deficiencies, requested changes have been made and requested information has been provided through the revision process, the SNO may resubmit the document for CNPE review.

9. Once the CNPE has recommended recognition, approval, and acknowledgment, the document is then sent to the ANA Board of Directors for consideration of the CNPE's recommendation. The Board of Directors may ACCEPT or REJECT the CNPE's recommendation. If the Board of Directors rejects the CNPE's recommendation, the document is returned to the specialty for further revision and resubmission.

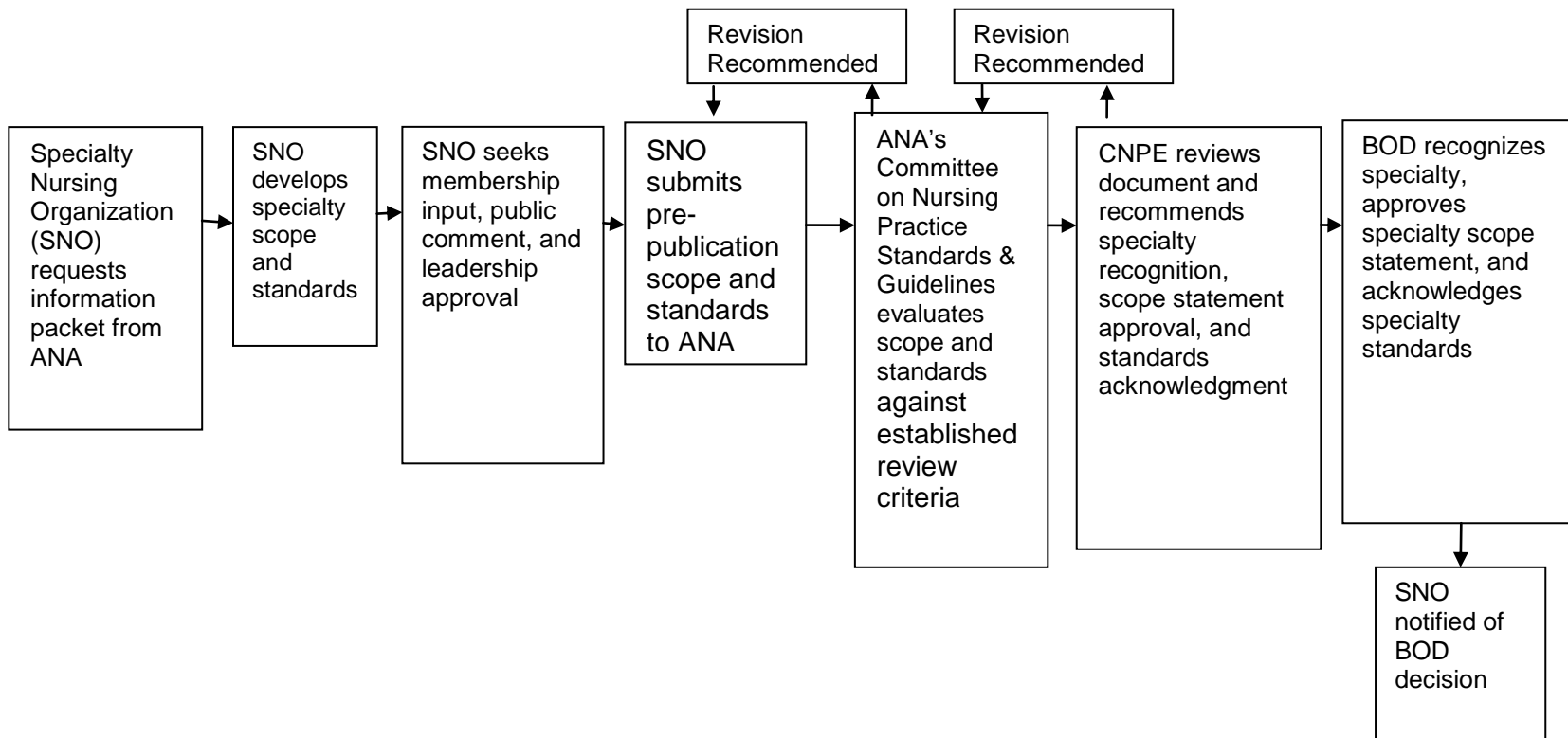
ANA's publishing department, Nursesbooks.org, provides free editorial, publishing, and marketing services for specialty nursing organizations wishing to maximize dissemination of those specialty scope and standards of practice that have completed the ANA review process. Nursesbooks.org markets a special package that includes all currently published specialty scope and standards of practice.

Specialty nursing scope and standards documents should be reviewed and revised as necessary at least every five years or more frequently if changes in the practice environment dictate.

In some instances, the ANA, at its sole discretion, may convene its own workgroup of experts to develop or revise the scope and standards of practice. See Appendix A "ANA Workgroups for Revision/Development of Specialty Nursing Scope of Practice Statements and Standards of Specialty Nursing Practice" for selection criteria for workgroup members. The ANA development/revision process includes a posting of the draft document for a 6-week public comment period at www.NursingWorld.org and also may incorporate discussion forums at appropriate professional meetings, conferences, and conventions. The resultant scope and standards are submitted for the usual ANA review process.

See Figure 2 for an overview of the process for recognition of a nursing specialty, approval of specialty nursing scope statements and/or acknowledgment of specialty nursing practice standards.

**FIGURE 2. PROCESS FOR RECOGNITION OF A NURSING SPECIALTY,
 APPROVAL OF SPECIALTY NURSING SCOPE STATEMENTS AND/OR
 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPECIALTY NURSING PRACTICE STANDARDS**



RECOGNITION AS A NURSING SPECIALTY

The process of recognizing an area of practice as a nursing specialty allows the profession to formally identify subset areas of focused practice. A clear description of that specialty nursing practice assists the larger community of nurses, healthcare consumers, and others to gain familiarity and understanding of the nursing specialty. Therefore, the document requesting ANA recognition must clearly and fully address each of the fourteen specialty recognition criteria. The CNPE requires that a contemporary specialty nursing scope of practice statement and standards of specialty nursing practice also accompany the request for recognition. Other supporting documents and references may be included to provide additional information, but are not required.

CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION AS A NURSING SPECIALTY

The recognition criteria were originally developed in 1998 by the American Nurses Association Congress of Nursing Practice and its Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines in collaboration with members of the Nursing Organization Liaison Forum (NOLF). The Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics regularly reviews the adequacy of the criteria, completed minor revisions in 2004, 2008, and 2010, and continues to use the criteria during the review and decision-making processes to recognize an area of practice as a nursing specialty.

A nursing specialty:

1. Defines itself as nursing.
2. Is clearly defined.
3. Has a well derived knowledge base particular to the practice of the nursing specialty.
4. Is concerned with phenomena of the discipline of nursing.
5. Subscribes to the overall purposes and functions of nursing.
6. Can identify a need and demand for itself.
7. Adheres to the overall licensure, certification, and education requirements of the profession.
8. Defines competencies for the area of specialty nursing practice.
9. Has existing mechanisms for supporting, reviewing, and disseminating research to support its knowledge base and evidence-based practice.
10. Has defined educational criteria for specialty preparation or graduate degree.

11. Has continuing education programs or other mechanisms for nurses in the specialty to maintain competence.
12. Is practiced nationally or internationally.
13. Includes a substantial number of registered nurses who devote most of their professional time to the specialty.
14. Is organized and represented by a national or international specialty association or branch of a parent organization.

APPROVAL OF A SPECIALTY NURSING SCOPE STATEMENT

Nursing's Social Policy Statement: The Essence of the Profession, identifies that "Professional nursing has a single scope of practice that encompasses the range of activities from those of the beginning registered nurse through those of the most advanced level of nursing practice" (ANA, 2010b, p. 15). A scope of practice statement describes the "who", "what", "where", "when", "why", and "how" of nursing practice.

"*Specialization* involves focusing on nursing practice in a specific area, identified from within the whole field of professional nursing. ANA and specialty nursing organizations delineate the components of professional nursing practice that are essential for any particular specialty" (ANA, 2010b, p. 17). For approval of the specialty nursing scope statement, the organization's written submission must address all of the following criteria. Should the area of practice not meet one of the criteria, an explanation of why the criterion is not applicable or cannot be met must be included.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF A SPECIALTY NURSING SCOPE STATEMENT

The specialty nursing scope of practice:

1. Includes a definition of the nursing specialty that discusses the parameters for the specialty nursing practice, practice characteristics, and phenomena of concern unique to the specialty practice.
2. Describes the practice environment in sufficient detail to establish an understanding of the specialty practice settings.
3. Clearly establishes who the practitioners are in the nursing specialty.
4. Describes the historical perspective of the development of the nursing specialty.
5. Discusses the current issues and trends in health care affecting the nursing specialty.
6. Differentiates generalist and advanced practice registered nurse or graduate-level prepared specialty nurse roles.

7. Addresses the educational preparation of the nurse for both generalist and advanced levels.
8. Addresses the mandate for continuing professional development and lifelong learning.
9. Addresses the presences or absence of specialty practice certification opportunities.
10. Incorporates language congruent with *Nursing's Social Policy Statement: The Essence of the Profession* (ANA, 2010).
11. Demonstrates congruence with the *Code of Ethics For Nurses With Interpretive Statements* (ANA, 2001).
12. Includes language congruent with *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* (ANA, 2010a).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF STANDARDS OF SPECIALTY NURSING PRACTICE

The following statement reflects the evolution to ANA's current thinking about standards of practice:

Significance of Standards

The Standards of Professional Nursing Practice are authoritative statements of the duties that all registered nurses, regardless of role, population, or specialty, are expected to perform competently. The standards published herein may be utilized as evidence of the standard of care, with the understanding that application of the standards is context-dependent. The standards are subject to change with the dynamics of the nursing profession, as new patterns of professional practice are developed and accepted by the nursing profession and the public. In addition, specific conditions and clinical circumstances may also affect the application of the standards at a given time, e.g., during a natural disaster. The standards are subject to formal, periodic review and revision.

The competencies that accompany each standard may be evidence of compliance with the corresponding standard. The list of competencies is not exhaustive. Whether a particular standard or competency applies depends upon the circumstances. (ANA, 2010a, p.31)

For example, a nurse providing treatment to an unconscious, critical patient who presents to the hospital by ambulance without family, has a duty to collect comprehensive data pertinent to the patient's health (Standard 1. Assessment). However, under the attendant circumstances, that nurse may not be expected to assess

family dynamics and impact on the patient's health and wellness (Assessment Competency). In the same circumstance, Standard 5B: Health Teaching and Health Promotion may not apply at all.

The standards language from *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition*, provides a framework useful in describing the specialty nursing practice for the registered nurse and the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) or graduate-level prepared specialty nurse. The new Significance of Standards content should also be incorporated in the description of nursing specialty practice.

In fact, the ANA's Committee on Nursing Practice Standards and Guidelines and Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics expects the specialty nursing organization will have adapted the Standards of Professional Nursing Practice template content and format and its components of Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance to best express the specialty practice expectations. For example, this framework could be presented as:

Standards of _____ (Specialty) Nursing Practice

Standards of Practice

- 1 Assessment
- 2 Diagnosis
- 3 Outcomes Identification
- 4 Planning
- 5 Implementation
 - 5A Coordination of Care
 - 5B Health Teaching and Health Promotion
 - 5C Consultation
 - 5D Prescriptive Authority and Treatment
- 6 Evaluation

Standards of Professional Performance

- 7 Ethics
- 8 Education
- 9 Evidence-Based Practice and Research
- 10 Quality of Practice
- 11 Communication
- 12 Leadership
- 13 Collaboration
- 14 Professional Practice Evaluation
- 15 Resource Utilization
- 16 Environmental Health

The Standards of Practice describe a competent level of nursing practice as demonstrated by the nursing process. The Standards of Professional Performance describe a competent level of behavior in the professional role – including activities related to ethics, education, evidence-based practice and research, quality of practice, communication, leadership, collaboration, professional practice evaluation, resource utilization, and environmental health. Every registered nurse is expected to meet each accompanying competency at some level.

Every specialty nursing organization must address the standards of specialty nursing practice and competencies for registered nurses and should include the applicable additional standards and competencies for the graduate-level prepared specialty nurse or APRN.

CRITERIA FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPECIALTY NURSING STANDARDS

The following criteria must be met for the specialty nursing standards to be acknowledged:

A. Standards of Practice Review Criteria

1. The standards of practice with minor modifications reflect the nursing process. The specialty name is added, for example, but the essence of the core statement is unchanged.
2. The standards of practice for the registered nurse are standards of basic competence.
3. The standards of practice for the graduate-level prepared specialty nurse and advanced practice registered nurse are standards of basic competence.
4. Each competency is congruent with the competency language in *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* and:
 - Is specific to the standard
 - Is measurable
 - Is a measure of basic performance
 - Has one action per measure

B. Standards of Professional Performance Review Criteria

1. The standards of professional performance describe a competent level of behavior in the professional role. The specialty name is added, for example, but the essence of the core statement is unchanged.
2. Standards of professional performance for the registered nurse are standards of basic competence.
3. Standards of professional performance for the graduate-level prepared specialty nurse and APRN are standards of basic competence.
4. Each competency for the specialty nursing performance standard is congruent with the competency language in *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition* and:
 - Is specific to the standard
 - Is measurable
 - Is a measure of basic performance

- Has one action per competency

C. Additional Review Criteria

1. If any standard is not applicable and has been deleted, the specialty nursing organization includes an explanation in an accompanying statement.
2. If additional standards are included, the specialty nursing organization includes an explanation about evolving practice and the need for the additional content in an accompanying statement.

SUMMARY

The profession of nursing is continually evolving in conjunction with healthcare consumer needs and desires, expanding healthcare and nursing knowledge, and the evolution of healthcare delivery sites, systems, and technologies. As nurses focus their practice in new and different areas of health care, clear statements of the scope of specialty nursing practice and standards of specialty practice and professional performance help assure continued understanding and recognition of nursing's diverse professional contributions.

GLOSSARY

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse – A nurse who has completed an accredited graduate-level education program preparing her or him for the role of certified nurse practitioner, certified registered nurse anesthetist, certified nurse-midwife, or clinical nurse specialist; has passed a national certification examination that measures APRN, role and population-focused competencies; maintains continued competence as evidenced by recertification; and is licensed to practice as an APRN. (*Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition, 2010, p. 63*)

Certification – The formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes. (American Board of Nursing Specialties, accessed on August 23, 2010 at <http://www.nursingcertification.org/>)

Competence – An individual who demonstrates competence is performing successfully at an expected level. (*Professional Role Competence Position Statement, ANA, 2008*)

Competency - A competency is an expected level of performance that integrates knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment. (*Professional Role Competence Position Statement, ANA, 2008*)

Graduate-level Prepared Specialty Nurse – A registered nurse prepared at the master's or doctoral educational level who has advanced knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment associated with one or more nursing specialties and is functioning in an advanced level as designated by elements of her or his position. (*Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, Second Edition, 2010, p. 65*)

Nurse – An individual registered or licensed by a state, commonwealth, territory, government, or other regulatory body to practice as a registered nurse.

Nursing – 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. (*Nursing's Social Policy Statement, 2010b, p. 3*)

Specialty Nursing Standards of Practice – Include specialty nursing standards of practice and professional performance modeled after ANA's Standards of Professional Nursing Practice

Standards of Practice – Describe a competent level of nursing care, as demonstrated by the critical thinking model known as the nursing process, which includes the components of assessment, diagnosis, outcomes identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. These standards encompass significant actions taken by registered nurses and form the foundation of the nurse's decision making.

Standards of Professional Performance – Describe a competent level of activities and behavior in the professional role. Registered nurses are accountable for their professional actions to themselves, their patients, their peers, and ultimately society.

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APPENDIX A

ANA WORKGROUPS FOR REVISION/DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALTY NURSING SCOPE OF PRACTICE STATEMENTS AND STANDARDS OF NURSING PRACTICE

FORMATION OF ANA WORKGROUP

ANA initiates a workgroup of at least 6-9 individuals and supports its activities to complete the specialty nursing scope and standards development or revision activities. ANA uses designated criteria for selection of the workgroup members. The availability of telecommunications technologies and the practice of posting draft scopes and standards documents to www.NursingWorld.org website permit extensive field reviews and comments as part of the process.

COMPOSITION OF EACH SCOPE AND STANDARDS WORKGROUP

Each Scope and Standards Workgroup has members who:

- Represent practice, education and administration areas
- Represent registered nurse and APRN roles as appropriate to specialty practice
- Have at least 5 years specialty practice experience
- Represent designated care settings as appropriate to the specialty practice

ANA will always identify a designated representative from the Office of General Counsel as a seated workgroup member for the duration of the work. Other ANA staff may be invited to participate as necessary.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUAL WORKGROUP MEMBERS

Each workgroup member is a registered nurse who:

- Is recognized as a content expert in the practice area for which the scope and standards are being developed or reviewed*
- Is currently actively practicing in the specialty area under discussion*
- Has an understanding of the broad scope of nursing and specialty practice and a vision for the “desired future state”
- Is expected to have an appreciation of the historical perspective

*Required

Critical thinking and visioning are essential for success of the workgroup. Members are expected to represent various schools of thought. Stakeholder specialty organization representatives are expected to be endorsed by and designated to speak for the specialty organization. Distribution of members by educational preparation, gender, ethnicity, geographic representation is considered.

APPENDIX B

REQUIREMENTS FOR SELF-PUBLISHING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations that elect to self-publish the Scope and Standards of Practice for their nursing specialty are required to include the following language to indicate ANA's recognition of the specialty, approval of the scope of practice and acknowledgement of the standards of practice. The language must be used verbatim. Formatting may be altered. Failure to include this language may result in revocation of ANA's recognition, approval and/or acknowledgement.

Recognition of the Specialty:

The American Nurses Association recognizes (insert specialty) nursing as a nursing specialty.

Approval of the Scope of Practice:

The American Nurses Association has approved the insert specialty scope of practice as defined herein. Approval is valid for five (5) years from the first date of publication of this document or until a new scope of practice has been approved, whichever occurs first.

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