July 8, 2015
Surgical First Assistant Credentialing Review Application
Amendment

1. The following will replace the response to Question #4 on the credentialing review application for surgical first assistants submitted on February 23, 2015, as well as the amendment submitted June 18, 2015.

PART A: Licensure of Surgical First Assistants

Part A of this proposal seeks to license surgical first assistants that have obtained a level of education, training, and examination as approved by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (hereafter, "the Department"). The surgical first assistant occupation has its own specific educational standards as well as private certification requirements. Under this proposal, the Department would collaborate with the private certifying bodies issuing certification for surgical first assistants to facilitate the State of Nebraska's endorsement of the education, training and testing upon which the private credential is based. These standards would become part of the new licensure standard for surgical first assistants in Nebraska. Under this proposal, only those surgical assistants who have met the new licensure standard of appropriate education, training and examination are eligible for licensure. The applicant group recommends that the Board of Medicine and Surgery oversees this license.

According to The American College of Surgeons, "[t]he [surgical first assistant] participates during a surgical operation and is a trained individual who is able to participate in and actively assist the surgeon in completing the operation safely and expeditiously by helping to provide exposure, maintain hemostasis, and serve other technical functions." The surgical first assistant works under the personal supervision of a physician as an allied health care provider, providing quality health care services.

Under Part A of the application, the proposed scope of practice for a surgical first assistant includes but is not limited to:

1. Assisting the surgical team in the intraoperative care of a surgical patient,
2. Positioning the patient,
3. Preparing and draping the patient for the operative procedure,
4. Providing visualization of the operative site,
5. Assist with hemostasis,
6. Assist with closure of body planes,
    a. Utilizing running or interrupted subcutaneous sutures with absorbable or nonabsorbable material,
    b. Utilizing subcuticular closure technique with or without adhesive skin closure strips,
    c. Closing skin with method indicated by surgeon (suture, stapes, etc.),
    d. Postoperative subcutaneous injection of local anesthetic agent as directed by the surgeon,
7. Applying appropriate wound dressings,
8. Providing assistance in securing drainage systems to tissue,
9. Preparing specimens, such as grafts, and

10. Performing tasks during a surgical procedure delegatable under the personal supervision of a licensed physician appropriate to the level of competence of the surgical first assistant.

The applicants want to ensure that training for surgical first assistants can occur in Nebraska. This requires that trainees are allowed, under state law, to perform tasks integral to the accredited program in which he or she is enrolled while unlicensed. Under this proposal, the applicants are requesting that statutory language similar to that which applies to physician assistants under Neb. Rev. Stat. 38-2048 is developed and included in the legislative proposal to facilitate training of surgical first assistants in the state. This will also pave the way for development of accredited programs in Nebraska's educational institutions.

The proposed language is as follows: Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a trainee may perform medical services when he or she renders such services within the scope of an approved program.

The following health care practitioners will be exempted from the Surgical First Assistant Practice Act: Physician, Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant, Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse.

PART B: Registry for Surgical Technologists

Part B of this proposal requests creation of a mandatory registry with a competency assessment requirement for surgical technologists. The purpose of this registry is to assist the State of Nebraska in ensuring that individuals functioning in the surgical technology occupation meet the competency requirements necessary to provide quality care in the State. The applicant group recommends that the Board of Nursing oversee the creation and maintenance of the registry.

Completion of an accredited surgical technology program is not a requirement of the registry but a component of the information collected. As a provision of Part B of this proposal, the registry shall include the highest level of education of the registrant. Applicants will be required to provide a copy of his or her transcript in support of an indication that he or she has completed a surgical assisting program. The proposal also requests that the documentation includes an opportunity for the applicant to acknowledge his or her possession of certification in surgical technology from a private certifying board.

A sample proposed model for the mandatory registry qualifications may include:

To qualify for placement on the Registry, the applicant must:

1. Be at least 19 years of age;
2. Be of good moral character; and
3. Be a citizen of the United States, or an alien lawfully admitted into the United States;
4. Submit to the Department:
    a. A completed application including:
        1. applicant name, address, birth date, last four digits of the applicant's Social Security Number;
        2. identification of any felony or misdemeanor conviction along with date of occurrence and county in which the conviction occurred;
        3. whether or not the applicant has completed an accredited program in surgical technology;

4. whether or not the applicant has obtained private certification in surgical technology; and
5. certification of competency assessment completed by a licensed health care professional.

b. All records, documents or information requested by the Department;

c. The required non-refundable fee as determined.

Though the Department will develop registry requirements, the following is a potential model based on the Medication Aide Registry (71-6723, 71-6725), including the elements for the competency assessment.

Surgical technologists are allied health professionals who are an integral part of the team of medical practitioners providing surgical care to patients. Surgical technologists work under the direction of hospital and clinic policies to ensure that the operating room environment is safe, equipment functions properly and the operative procedure is conducted under conditions that maximize patient safety.

As part of the registry application, a determination will be made by a licensed health care professional and placed in writing that the surgical technologist is competent to perform the following activities:

1. Checks supplies and equipment needed for surgical procedure,
2. Scrubs, gowns and gloves,
3. Sets up sterile table with instruments, supplies, equipment, and medications/solutions needed for procedure,
4. Performs appropriate counts with circulator prior to the operation and before incision is closed,
5. Gowns and gloves surgeon and assistants,
6. Helps in draping sterile field,
7. Passes instruments, etc., to surgeon during procedure,
8. Maintains highest standard of sterile technique during procedure,
9. Prepares sterile dressings,
10. Cleans and prepares instruments for terminal sterilization,
11. Assists other members of team with terminal cleaning of room,
12. Assists in prepping room for the next patient,
13. Positioning the patient,
14. Preparing and draping the patient for the operative procedure, and
15. Providing visualization of the operative site.

The applicant group recommends that proof of current national certification exempts registry applicants from the competency requirement if the Department deems it appropriate.

2. The following statement found on page 13 of the application is stricken from the response to Question #5: "An ST works under the personal supervision of a registered nurse and the direct supervision of the independent licensed practitioner."