NNA
NEBRASKA NURSES ASSOCIATION

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Ron Briel
DHHS Program Specialist, Credentialing Review
Licensure Unit DHHS Licensure Unit
PO Box 94986
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Dear Mr. Briel,

The Nebraska Nurses Association (NNA) is in opposition of the proposed credentialing application for the Anesthesiology Assistant (AA). NNA's opposition is due to use of AAs creating a less efficient delivery care model, unnecessary cost, and negative impact on Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) education programs currently in Nebraska.

AAs are required to work under the medical supervision of a physician anesthesiologist. This double provider requirement creates insufficiency in delivery, and an increased cost of anesthesia care. The double provider requirement eliminates AAs as part of the solution to improving access to care in medically underserved areas, such as rural Nebraska, as critical access hospitals across the state do not employ in-house physician anesthesiologist.

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are sole anesthesia providers in 100% critical access hospitals across Nebraska. CRNAs practice independently and autonomously and thereby increase access to anesthesia services across the state in a cost-effective manner. CRNAs hold a bachelor's degree in nursing before they can enter CRNA programs and have a minimum of one-year acute care experience (such as in an Intensive Care Unit or Emergency Department). CRNA students have an educational and experiential foundation in direct patient care before entering CRNA programs. In contrast, education programs for AAs do not require clinical patient care experience before entering their 24-month AA training. This leaves a large gap in clinical capability, skill, and critical thinking when performing the advanced skill activity of providing anesthesia.

CRNA program enrollment has steadily increased in Nebraska, but these programs have reported an anticipated drop in enrollment of up to 40% if AAs are established in Nebraska. Introduction of AAs in Nebraska does not achieve goals of increased access, efficiency, or cost-effective patient care in Nebraska. Therefore, NNA opposes the AA application.

Kari Wade

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