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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Nebraska Board of Nursing

ADVISORY OPINION

OPINION: CPR: Nursing Accountability
ADOPTED: 2/2007
REVISED: 11/95, 4/11, 3/17, 7/18, 4/21
REAFFIRMED: 5/00, 7/01

This Nebraska Board of Nursing advisory opinion is issued in accordance with the Nebraska Nurse Practice Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. 38-2216 (2). As such, this advisory opinion is for informational purposes only and is non-binding. The advisory opinions define acts, which in the opinion of the board, are or are not permitted in the practice of nursing.

Nursing Accountability to Perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

Nurses have a professional ethical duty to provide care to persons entrusted to them for the provision of nursing and health care services (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015). Nurses in all practice settings are accountable for providing basic life support, including Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for any person in their care prior to the arrival of emergency medical personnel. The initiation of CPR is subject to physician orders and the person's advanced directives (CMS, 2017), but shall not be delayed when the status of the latter are unknown or unclear.

Nurses as potential rescuers shall initiate CPR following cardiac arrest (cessation or respirations and/or pulse) (American Heart Association [AHA], 2020) unless:

1. A valid Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is in place; or

2. There are obvious signs of irreversible death including
   - Rigor mortis (stiffness of the limbs and body that develops 2 to 4 hours after death and may take up to 12 hours to fully develop)
   - Dependent lividity (reddish-blue discoloration of the skin resulting from the gravitational pooling of blood in the lower lying parts of the body in the position of death)
   - Decapitation (separation of the head from the body)
   - Transection (division by cutting across the body), or
   - Decomposition (decay); or

3. Initiating CPR could cause injury or peril to the rescuer (AHA, 2015).

In the absence of an employer/facility policy regarding the initiation of CPR, and not withstanding a witnessed or unwitnessed event, if a person is unresponsive and not breathing normally, CPR shall be initiated unless there is a valid DNR order in place, or if there are signs of irreversible death that would make it impossible or clearly futile to perform chest compressions.

Current CPR certification is not required in order for the nurse to be accountable to perform resuscitation based on their assessment of the individual and their level of competency. Nurses have a professional responsibility to maintain current CPR certification for healthcare providers through a CPR provider whose training includes hands-on skills practice and in-person assessment and demonstration of skills.

References:

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ANA. (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements.* Silver Spring, MD: Author.

CMS. (2015). *Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in nursing homes.* https://www.cms.gov/

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CMS. (2017). *Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in nursing homes*. State Operations Manual. Appendix PP, §483, F678. https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/GuidanceforLawsAndRegulations/Downloads/Appendix-PP-State-Operations-Manual.pdf.