

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

### Introduction

The following table is a comparison of the scope of practice of the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and the Medical Assistant-Registered (MA-R), Medical Assistant-Certified (MA-C), Medical Assistant-Hemodialysis Technician (MA-HT), Medical Assistant-Phlebotomist (MA-P), and Medical Assistant-Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). See the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) [Support for Practicing Nurses Website](#) and the [Washington State Department of Health Medical Assistant Website](#) for laws, rules, and additional resources.

Medical Abbreviations		HCP – Health Care Provider			Medical Assistant	
• EEG – Electrocardiogram	• ARNP – Advanced Practice Registered Nurse	• MD – Physician and Surgeon	• MA-R – Medical Assistant-Registered			
• EKG – Electrocardiogram	• DDS – Dentist	• ND – Naturopathic Physician	• MA-C – Medical Assistant-Certified			
• ID – Intradermal	• DO – Osteopathic Physician and Surgeon	• OD - Optometrist	• MA-HT- Medical Assistant-Hemodialysis			
• OTC – Over the Counter	• DPM – Podiatric Physician and Surgeon	• RN – Registered Nurse	Technician			
• OORM- Opioid Overdose Reversal Medications	• LM – Licensed Midwife	• PA – Physician Assistant	• MA-P – Medical Assistant-Phlebotomist			
• PO – Oral	• LPN – Licensed Practical Nurse		• MA-EMT – Medical Assistant-Emergency Medical			
• SQ – Subcutaneous			Technician			
• IM – Intramuscular						
• IV – Intravenous						
Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P	MA-EMT
<b>Nursing Process</b>	Assists the RN in implementing the nursing process	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific
<b>Responsibility and Accountability</b>	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible
<b>Patient and Task Complexity</b>	Routine nursing situations <sup>2</sup>	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes	Non-complex, routine, predictable outcomes
<b>Assessment</b>	Yes – Focused nursing assessments <a href="#">Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse Scope of Practice Advisory Opinion</a>	Monitoring - Limited • Vital signs • Observing and reporting	Monitoring - Limited • Vital signs • Observing and reporting	No	No	Monitoring – Limited • Vital signs • Observing and reporting

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<b>Clinical and Nursing Judgment</b>	Yes Required to use nursing judgment	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Patient Education</b>	Yes – Routine and non-complex	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment	Limited – May instruct patients on tasks within their scope of practice not requiring clinical judgment
<b>Nursing Delegation</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Routine Examinations, Procedures and Minor Office Surgeries</b>	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with moderate sedation	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with minimal sedation.	Preparing patients for, and assisting with, including those with minimal sedation.	No	No	Preparing patients and treatment areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only in a hospital setting or in an emergency department that operates under the license of a hospital.</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> <li>ACLS procedures within the LPN's competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute</li> <li>Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators</li> <li>Simple eye irrigation</li> <li>Hemorrhage control with direct pressure or hemostatic gauze</li> <li>Spinal and extremity motion restriction and immobilization</li> </ul>
<b>Oxygen Administration</b>	Yes – Any administration device/method	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or mask	Yes – Nasal cannula or Mask	No	Yes, including airway maintenance, stabilization, and suctioning
<b>Autoclaving, Sterilizing Equipment and Instruments</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

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<b>Preparing and Assisting in Sterile Procedures</b>	Yes – Routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can prepare and assist in routine and non-complex procedures in any setting</li> </ul>	Yes - Routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can prepare only</li> </ul> Limits – not in a hospital setting	Yes – Routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can prepare and assist</li> </ul> Limits – not in a hospital setting	No	No	No
<b>Aseptic Techniques</b>	Yes – Routine, non-complex in any setting	No	Yes – Routine – Limits – in settings other than a hospital	No	No	No
<b>Urinary Catheterization</b>	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sterile or non-sterile</li> <li>Urethral</li> <li>Indwelling or intermittent</li> <li>Suprapubic replacement in an established tract</li> </ul>	Yes – Urethral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sterile or non-sterile</li> <li>Indwelling or intermittent</li> </ul>	Yes – Urethral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sterile or non-sterile</li> <li>Indwelling or intermittent</li> </ul>	No	No	No
<b>Specimen Collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary, venous, or arterial invasive procedures for blood withdrawal</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate and high complexity tests</li> </ul> Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Microbiological</li> <li>COVID-19 testing</li> </ul> Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	Yes – Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary puncture and venipuncture</li> <li>Microbiological</li> <li>COVID-19 testing</li> </ul> Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	No	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary, venous, or arterial invasive procedures for blood withdrawal</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate and high complexity tests</li> </ul> Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary puncture and venipuncture</li> <li>Microbiological</li> </ul> Instructing patients to collect urine and fecal specimens
<b>Screening and Diagnostic Tests</b>	Yes – Routine and Non-complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EKG</li> <li>EEG</li> <li>Respiratory Testing</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate complexity tests</li> <li>Radiology procedures</li> </ul>	Yes – Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EKG</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate complexity tests</li> </ul>	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EKG</li> <li>Respiratory Testing</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate complexity tests</li> </ul>	No	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EKG</li> <li>CLIA-waived tests</li> <li>Moderate and high complexity tests</li> </ul>	Yes – Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EKG</li> <li>Respiratory testing</li> <li>COVID-19 tests</li> </ul>
<b>Experimental Drugs</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Chemotherapy</b>	Yes <a href="#">Infusion Therapy Management</a>	No	No	No	No	No

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<b>Medications and Biologics</b>	<p>Yes – Legend and OTC By any route Can compound and reconstitute medications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can administer medications from multi-dose vials</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule II-V</li> </ul> <p>Opioid Overdose Reversal Medications (OORM) following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Administration of Sedating, Analgesic, and Anesthetic Agents</a></p> <p><a href="#">Compounding and Reconstituting Medications</a></p>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ophthalmic, topical, PO, IN, and rectal, ID, SQ, IM, and IV (except for central lines) – may interrupt an IV line, administer injection, and restart at the same rate</li> <li>IM drugs only by unit or single dose verified by HCP</li> <li>Vaccines – PO, ID, SQ, and IM – multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule III-V – Intramuscular injection only by unit or single dose</li> </ul> <p>OORM following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup>See MA-R Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited Legend and OTC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ophthalmic, topical, PO, IN, and rectal, ID, SQ, IM, and IV (except for central lines) – may interrupt an IV line, administer injection, and restart at the same rate</li> <li>IM drugs only by unit or single dose verified by HCP</li> <li>Vaccines – PO, ID, SQ, and IM – multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule III-V – Intramuscular injection only by unit or single dose</li> </ul> <p>OORM following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup>See MA-C Drug Administration Table</p>	<p>Yes – Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topical or SQ administration of local anesthetics for fistula needle placement</li> <li>Intraperitoneal administration of sterile electrolyte solutions and heparin for peritoneal dialysis</li> </ul> <p>Controlled Substances – Not allowed</p> <p>May not administer vaccines</p> <p>OORM following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p>	<p>No</p> <p>OORM following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p>	<p>Yes – Limited Limited to vaccines, oral glucose</p> <p>By unit or single dosage or by a dosage calculated and verified by HCP. Multidose vaccine is considered a unit dose.</p> <p>OORM following Standing Order</p> <p><a href="#">Statewide Standing Order to Dispense Naloxone (RCW 69.41.095)</a></p> <p><sup>1</sup>See MA-EMT Drug Administration Table</p>
<b>Blood and Blood Transfusion Components</b>	<p>Yes</p> <p><a href="#">Infusion Therapy Management</a></p>	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Phlebotomy</b>	<p>Yes – Immediate or direct supervision not required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary blood punctures</li> <li>Venous</li> <li>Arterial</li> </ul> <p>Obtain blood samples via central lines, peripheral IVs, and arterial lines</p>	Capillary blood punctures only	<p>Yes - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary blood punctures only</li> <li>Venous</li> </ul>	<p>Yes - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Venous</li> </ul>	<p>Yes - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary blood punctures</li> <li>Venipuncture</li> <li>Arterial invasive procedures under immediate HCP supervision</li> <li>Line draws if IV fluid is stopped and restarted under immediate HCP supervision</li> </ul>	<p>Yes - Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capillary blood puncture</li> <li>Venipuncture</li> </ul>

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<b>Standing Orders</b>	Yes – Routine and Non-Complex <a href="#">Standing Orders</a>	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines	Yes	Yes – Limited Cannot give medications following standing orders – except vaccines
<b>Dialysis Procedures</b>	Yes – Routine and Non-complex: No requirements for immediate supervision and no limits to setting • Hemodialysis • Peritoneal Dialysis	No	No	Yes - Limited • Connection to vascular or peritoneal catheter • In renal dialysis or center under immediate RN supervision or in a home if a RN and HCP are available for consultation	No	No
<b>Direction, Delegation and Supervision<sup>2</sup></b>	Yes • HCP does not need to be on the premises • General direction and supervision	Yes • HCP does not need to be present during vaccine administration, or when performing diagnostic testing but must be immediately available • For other tasks, the HCP must be on the premises  <i>Exceptions:</i> • HCP does not need to be present during procedures to withdraw blood, administer vaccines, or obtain specimens for or perform diagnostic testing, but must be immediately available Telemedicine visits <sup>2</sup>	Yes • Direct or immediate supervision required • HCP must be on the premises • Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available  <i>Exceptions:</i> • HCP does not need to be present during procedures to withdraw blood, administer vaccines, or obtain specimens for or perform diagnostic testing, but must be immediately available • Telemedicine visits <sup>2</sup>	Yes • Direct or immediate supervision required • HCP must be on the premises	Yes • Direct or immediate supervision required • HCP does not need to be present but must be immediately available for blood draws only	Yes • Direct or immediate supervision required • HCP must be on the premises • Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available  <i>Exceptions:</i> • HCP does not need to be present during procedures to withdraw blood, administer vaccines, or obtain specimens for or perform diagnostic testing, but must be immediately available • Telemedicine visits <sup>2</sup>

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<b>Telemedicine</b>	Yes <sup>2</sup> <a href="#">Nursing Telehealth Practice: Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Nursing Technician, and Nursing Assistant</a>	Yes – Limited <sup>2</sup>  Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.  May perform the following without the HCP present or immediately available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing and maintaining exam &amp; treatment areas</li><li>• Taking vital signs</li><li>• Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms</li><li>• Preparing patient for exam</li><li>• Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens</li><li>• Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing</li></ul>	Yes – Limited <sup>2</sup>  Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.  May perform the following without the HCP present or immediately available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing and maintaining exam &amp; treatment areas</li><li>• Taking vital signs</li><li>• Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms</li><li>• Preparing patient for exam</li><li>• Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens</li><li>• Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing</li></ul>	Yes – Limited <sup>2</sup>  Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.	Yes – Limited <sup>2</sup>  Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.	Yes – Limited <sup>2</sup>  Direct patient care with supervision only if no other HCP is physically present and immediately available at the site the MA is providing care.  May perform the following without the HCP present or immediately available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing and maintaining exam &amp; treatment areas</li><li>• Taking vital signs</li><li>• Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms</li><li>• Preparing patient for exam</li><li>• Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens</li><li>• Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing</li></ul>
<b>Health Care Setting</b>	Any setting where health care is provided	Any setting where health care is provided	Any setting where health care is provided	Any setting where health care is provided	Any setting where health care is provided	Only in a hospital setting or in an emergency department that operates under the license of a hospital
<b>Direction and Supervision of other Health Care Professionals</b>	Yes – Limited Direction and Supervision of Nursing Assistants within their <a href="#">Core Competencies (WAC 246-841A)</a>	No	No	No	No	No

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

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<b>Health Care Provider (HCP): Directing or Delegating and Supervising<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• OD</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• DDS</li> <li>• LM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN</li> <li>• ARNP</li> <li>• MD</li> <li>• DO</li> <li>• ND</li> <li>• PA</li> <li>• DPM</li> <li>• OD</li> </ul>

[Nursing Laws and Rules](#)

[Medical Assistant Laws and Rules](#)

## Licensed Practical Nurse and Medical Assistant Scope of Practice Comparison

### <sup>1</sup>MA Medication Administration Table

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances	Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments	Immediate supervision
Schedule III, IV, and V	Intramuscular only by single or unit dose verified by HCP	Direct visual supervision
Other Legend Drugs	Topical, eye drops, ointments, and vaccines (oral, intradermal, subcutaneous, and intramuscular)	Immediate supervision

**MA-C Medication Administration Table** \*Prohibited from administering medication through a central intravenous line

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances	Oral, topical, rectal, otic, ophthalmic, or inhaled routes	Immediate supervision
Schedule III, IV, and V	Subcutaneous, intradermal, intramuscular, or peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision
Other Legend Drugs	All other routes	Immediate supervision
	Peripheral intravenous injections	Direct visual supervision

**MA-EMT Medication Administration Table** \*Prohibited from administering medication through a central intravenous line

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances	Not allowed	Not applicable
Schedule III, IV, and V		
Other Legend Drugs	Limited to vaccines, or	Immediate supervision

### <sup>2</sup>Definitions: Direction, Supervision, and Delegation

#### MA Definition:

- Delegation: Direct authorization granted by a health care practitioner (HCP) to a medical assistant to perform the functions authorized in RCW [18.360.050](#) which fall within the HCP's scope of practice and the training and experience of the MA.
- Supervision: Supervision of procedures by a health care practitioner who is physically present and is immediately available in the facility
- Telemedicine supervision: Delivery of direct patient care under supervision by a HCP provided through use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between a MA at the originating site and an HCP off premises. Does not include use of audio-only telephone, FAX or electronic mail.

#### LPN Definition

- Direction: Instructions or orders to provide nursing services or carry out medical regimen under the direction of an authorized health care practitioner.
- Supervision: Provision of guidance and evaluation for the accomplishment of a nursing task or activity with the initial direction of the task or activity; periodic inspection of the actual act of accomplishing the task or activity; and the authority to require corrective action.
- Delegation: The term delegation does not apply to LPNs. The activity must be within the LPNs SOP already. Transferring the performance of a nursing task (that the person would not normally be allowed to do to competent individuals in selected situations following the delegation process. It must be within the LPN's SOP.
- Telemedicine supervision: Delivery of direct patient care under the direction supervision by the HCP provided through use of interactive audio and video technology, permitting real-time communication between the LPN at the originating site and the HCP off premises or between the LPN and a patient. Does not include use of audio-only telephone, FAX or electronic mail. The LPN may function as the primary clinical provider within their legal scope of practice under the direction and supervision of an authorized HCP.
- Routine nursing situations. A routine nursing situation is one that is relatively free of complexity, and the clinical and behavioral state of the client is relatively stable, requires care based upon a comparatively fixed and limited body of knowledge. In complex nursing care situations, the LPN functions as an assistant to the RN by carrying out selected aspects of the designated nursing regimen to assist the RN in the performance of nursing care.