



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 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EEG – Electrocardiogram• EKG – Electrocardiogram• ID – Intradermal• OTC – Over the Counter• OORM- Opioid Overdose Reversal Medications• PO – Oral• SQ – Subcutaneous• IM – Intramuscular• IV – Intravenous		HCP – Health Care Provider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ARNP – Advanced Practice Registered Nurse• DDS – Dentist• DO – Osteopathic Physician and Surgeon• DPM – Podiatric Physician and Surgeon• LM – Licensed Midwife• LPN – Licensed Practical Nurse• MD – Physician and Surgeon• ND – Naturopathic Physician• OD - Optometrist• RN – Registered Nurse• PA – Physician Assistant			Medical Assistant <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MA-R – Medical Assistant-Registered• MA-C – Medical Assistant-Certified• MA-HT- Medical Assistant-Hemodialysis Technician• MA-P – Medical Assistant-Phlebotomist• MA-EMT – Medical Assistant-Emergency Medical Technician	
Activity	LPN	MA-R	MA-C	MA-HT	MA-P	MA-EMT
Nursing Process	Assists the RN in implementing the nursing process	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific	Task Specific
Responsibility and Accountability	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible	Individually accountable and responsible
Patient and Task Complexity	Routine nursing situations ²	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
Assessment	Yes – Focused nursing assessments Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse Scope of Practice Advisory Opinion	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vital signs• Observing and reporting	Monitoring - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vital signs• Observing and reporting	No	No	Monitoring – Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vital signs• Observing and reporting



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Clinical and Nursing Judgment	Yes Required to use nursing judgment	No	No	No	No	No
Patient Education	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
Nursing Delegation	No	No	No	No	No	No
Routine Examinations, Procedures and Minor Office Surgeries	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"> Only in a hospital setting or in an emergency department that operates under the license of a hospital.
Emergency Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators ACLS procedures within the LPN's competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPR/First Aid- Not addressed in rule or statute Use of Automated External Defibrillators and Semiautomated External Defibrillators Simple eye irrigation Hemorrhage control with direct pressure or hemostatic gauze Spinal and extremity motion restriction and immobilization
Oxygen Administration	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
Autoclaving, Sterilizing Equipment and Instruments	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No



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

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

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Standing Orders	Yes – Routine and Non-Complex Standing Orders	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
Dialysis Procedures	Yes – Routine and Non-complex: No requirements for immediate supervision and no limits to setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hemodialysis Peritoneal Dialysis 	No	No	Yes - Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
Direction, Delegation and Supervision²	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCP does not need to be on the premises General direction and supervision 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 ²	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP must be on the premises Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available <i>Exceptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 visits² 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP must be on the premises 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP does not need to be present but must be immediately available for blood draws only 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct or immediate supervision required HCP must be on the premises Blood Draws – HCP must be immediately available <i>Exceptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 visits²

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Telemedicine	Yes ² Nursing Telehealth Practice: Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Nursing Technician, and Nursing Assistant	Yes – Limited ² 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"> • Preparing and maintaining exam & treatment areas • Taking vital signs • Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms • Preparing patient for exam • Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens • Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing 	Yes – Limited ² 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"> • Preparing and maintaining exam & treatment areas • Taking vital signs • Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms • Preparing patient for exam • Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens • Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing 	Yes – Limited ² 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 ² 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 ² 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"> • Preparing and maintaining exam & treatment areas • Taking vital signs • Obtaining and reporting signs and symptoms • Preparing patient for exam • Instructing patients to collect urine or fecal specimens • Obtaining specimens for microbiological testing
Health Care Setting	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
Direction and Supervision of other Health Care Professionals	Yes – Limited Direction and Supervision of Nursing Assistants within their Core Competencies (WAC 246-841A)	No	No	No	No	No



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

[Nursing Laws and Rules](#)
[Medical Assistant Laws and Rules](#)



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¹MA Medication Administration Table

Drug Category	Routes Permitted*	Level of Supervision Required
Controlled Substances Schedule III, IV, and V	Ophthalmic, topical, and ointments	Immediate supervision
	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 Schedule III, IV, and V	Oral, topical, rectal, otic, ophthalmic, or inhaled routes	Immediate supervision
	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 Schedule III, IV, and V	Not allowed	Not applicable
Other Legend Drugs	Limited to vaccines, or	Immediate supervision

²Definitions: 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.