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VA Grants Full Practice Authority to Advance Practice Registered Nurses

Decision Follows Federal Register Notice That Netted More Than 200,000 Comments

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it is amending provider regulations to permit full practice authority to three roles of VA advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification, regardless of State restrictions that limit such full practice authority, except for applicable State restrictions on the authority to prescribe and administer controlled substances, when such APRNs are acting within the scope of their VA employment.

“Advanced practice registered nurses are valuable members of VA’s health care system,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David J. Shulkin. “Amending this regulation increases our capacity to provide timely, efficient, effective and safe primary care, aids VA in making the most efficient use of APRN staff capabilities, and provides a degree of much needed experience to alleviate the current access challenges that are affecting VA.”

In May 2016, VA announced its intentions, through a [proposed rule](#), to grant full practice authority to four APRN roles. Though VA does have some localized issues, we do not have immediate and broad access challenges in the area of anesthesia care across the full VA health care system that require full practice authority for all Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). Therefore, VA will not finalize the provision including CRNAs in the final rule as one of the APRN roles that may be granted full practice authority at this time. VA will request comment on the question of whether there are current anesthesia care access issues for particular states or VA facilities and whether permitting CRNAs to practice to the full extent of their advanced authority would resolve these issues.

APRNs are clinicians with advanced degrees and training who provide primary, acute and specialty health care services; they complete masters, post-masters or doctoral degrees. There are four APRN roles: Certified Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, and Certified Nurse Midwife.

“CRNAs provide an invaluable service to our Veterans,” Under Secretary for Health Shulkin continued. “Though CRNAs will not be included in VA’s full practice authority under this final rule, we are requesting comments on whether there are access issues or other unconsidered circumstances that might warrant their inclusion in a future rulemaking. In the meantime, we owe it to Veterans to increase access to care in areas where we know we have immediate and broad access challenges.”

All VA APRNs are required to obtain and maintain current national certification.

The final rulemaking establishes professional qualifications an individual must possess to be appointed as an APRN within VA, establishes the criteria under which VA may grant full practice authority to an APRN and defines the scope of full practice authority for each of the three roles of APRN. **Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists will *not* be included in VA's full practice authority under this final rule.**

VA is the nation's largest employer of nurses; as of July 2016 its workforce of approximately 93,500 nurses (RNs, LPNs, NAs) includes approximately 5,769 APRNs

For more information about openings for nurses or other health care positions at VA, visit Vacareers@va.gov.

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