



# Department of State Division of Professional Regulation

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## Delaware State Board of Nursing – Advanced Practice Nursing Committee September 2013 - Newsletter

### **APRN Consensus Model & Collaborative Language**

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Collaboration is communication, coordination and cooperative efforts of healthcare professionals around care delivery. To understand collaboration related to APRNs, it is first important to understand the APRN Consensus Model. The model was developed in response to the increased appreciation of the important role that APRNs can play in improving access to high-quality, cost-effective care.

However, the ability of patients to access APRN care is limited by:

- lack of common definitions regarding the APRN roles
- increasing numbers of nursing specializations
- debates on appropriate credentials and scope of practice, and
- lack of uniformity in educational and state regulations.

The Consensus Model seeks to address these issues. (NCSBN, 2013)

The APRN Consensus Model is a regulatory model based on the broad definition of regulation. According to Webster's Dictionary, regulation means "the control according to rule, principle or law." For the APRN Consensus Model, this includes entities that control the APRN preparation and credentialing, including nurse educators, certifiers, and licensing regulators. (NCSBN, 2013)

The ability of an APRN to practice and the scope of that practice are governed by state law (i.e., the state's nurse practice act and Board of Nursing Rules). The Model recommends that state boards adopt language that would allow an APRN to move from another state and be licensed in the new state if he or she meets the education criteria that were in place when the APRN was originally licensed to practice. The [National Council of State Boards of Nursing \(NCSBN\)](#) has developed APRN model legislative language. The NCSBN model language was used as a foundation when drafting the proposed APRN model legislative language for Delaware. Feedback from Delaware stakeholders about the APRN model was also instrumental in developing the proposed legislative language.

The APN Committee of the Delaware State Board of Nursing has been meeting with stakeholders for over a year. The APN Committee has held a series of statewide town hall meetings and given presentations at most Delaware hospitals. The meetings provided a forum for feedback and sharing. On a legislative day arranged by the APN Committee, all interested APNs were invited to meet with their legislators to discuss the APRN Consensus Model. In addition, the APN committee presented the APRN Consensus Model to several other Delaware boards including the Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline and Board of Pharmacy. All feedback was carefully considered in developing and revising the draft language.

The overall feedback received was positive. The feedback included support for:

- Entry-level education for all APRNs is a graduate degree or postgraduate certificate (postmasters or doctorate) awarded by an accredited academic institution.
- Board certification is required. APRNs must pass a psychometrically sound exam that measures competency.

- The title “advanced practice registered nurse (APRN)” will be adopted and the title “APN” retired.
- The Consensus Model enhances APRN mobility and utilization of patient care services across state lines.

The issue generating the most dialog with stakeholders was around collaboration—specifically, the collaborative practice agreement. The APN Committee recommended *not* requiring a collaborative practice agreement in the proposed legislative language for Delaware. The recommendation was based on NCSBN’s model language, which was based on studies over the past 30 years. Data from these studies has demonstrated that APRNs provide safe, cost-effective, high-quality care.

The APN Committee fully endorses collaborative practice. The APN Committee understands the benefit for patients when providers work in a collaborative practice environment. The APN Committee also understands that employers large and small may want to establish a collaborative practice agreement between themselves and an APRN. *Nothing in the proposed legislative language prohibits or restricts any employer from requiring a collaborative agreement with an employee.*

**Proposed Language:**

“APRN’s are expected to consult with healthcare delivery experts consistent with their areas of practice when providing comprehensive, holistic nursing care. They are expected to have a mechanism for consultation and referral for patients requiring care beyond the APRN scope of practice.”

The proposed legislative language provides a mechanism for protecting public safety and improving access to quality healthcare for patients in all geographic locations in Delaware. The adoption of the APRN Consensus Model allows the growing number of APRNs in Delaware to practice to their full potential as APRNs and thus provide needed healthcare for people throughout Delaware.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Do APRNs practice under the physician’s license? NO, they practice on their own license.
2. Are APRNs required to be supervised by a physician in DE? NO, they are allowed independent practice.
3. Can APRNs open an independent practice in DE? YES, they have been allowed to do this since 1994 when APN licensure and RxAPN language were implemented
4. Does a collaborative agreement protect patients from harm? NO, research has demonstrated that APRNs practice safely without a collaborative agreement.
5. Does a collaborative agreement protect APRN’s from malpractice? NO, APRNs are responsible for their professional practice.

**References:**

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2013), Campaign for the APRN Consensus Model and Toolkit <https://www.ncsbn.org/aprn.htm>

**APN Committee Meetings  
Join the Dialog!**  
Dates locations and times for APN Committee meetings are posted on <http://egov.delaware.gov/pmc/#agency45>

