

TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING
3.8.4.a. EDUCATION GUIDELINE
Utilizing Clinical Teaching Assistants and Skills Lab Instructors

Effective: 01/10/2012

Nursing programs frequently ask questions about the use of clinical teaching assistants (CTAs) and nursing skills lab assistants. This document is intended to provide guidance to nursing programs regarding qualifications for and proper utilization of CTAs and lab assistants in accordance with Board Rule 214 Vocational Nursing Education and Rule 215 Professional Nursing Education. This guideline should be utilized in conjunction with Rule 214.10 Clinical Learning Experiences and Rule 215.10 Clinical Learning Experiences.

Note: While lab assistants may be used in both vocational (VN) and professional (RN) nursing programs, CTAs may only be utilized in professional nursing programs.

Clinical Teaching Assistants:

- ❖ CTAs may be employed by the professional nursing program to assist the program faculty with the supervision of students during clinical learning experiences.
- ❖ Working under the supervision of a Master's or Doctorally prepared nursing faculty member, CTAs function in the role of clinical supervisor and are responsible for supervision of students' skills performance, student evaluation, and other aspects of student learning in the clinical setting.
- ❖ The faculty member must be present in the same facility, and available to the CTA for consultation as needed. When CTAs are used, the number of students supervised by one faculty member may increase from 10 to 15.
- ❖ Rule 215.10 states, in pertinent part, that the minimum qualifications for a CTA are:
 - Current license or privilege to practice as a registered nurse in the State of Texas; and,
 - Clinical expertise to function effectively and safely in the designated area of teaching.
- ❖ It is recommended that CTAs have the same, or higher level of, education as the level of the nursing program in which they are teaching. For example, BSN programs should consider hiring CTAs with a minimum of a BSN degree and ADN programs should consider hiring CTAs who hold a minimum of an ADN degree.

Lab Assistants:

- ❖ Vocational and professional nursing programs may employ lab assistants to manage the nursing skills lab. The qualifications and expectations for the lab assistant should be clearly defined and provided in the job description. Some activities that might be included in the job description are:
 - Ordering and maintaining lab supplies and equipment;

- scheduling students' lab times;
 - organizing the laboratory; and,
 - assisting students with lab practice (if the lab assistant is a nurse).
- ❖ Lab assistants are not considered nursing faculty and, therefore, they cannot teach students, nor can they evaluate students' performance in the skills lab. However, the lab assistant who is a nurse may follow a pre-set lab procedure, coach the students, and check-off students' practice in the lab. Checking-off practice differs from evaluation, as evaluation is a more complicated activity and involves making a decision about a student's performance, skills acquisition, and mastery of content.
- ❖ **A special note of caution to professional nursing programs regarding the above statement:** Many professional nursing programs hire RNs who hold ADN or BSN degrees as lab assistants, and it is important to remember that only qualified Master's or Doctorally prepared nursing faculty can teach and evaluate students.
- ❖ The 1:10 clinical ratio requirements in Rule 214.10 and Rule 215.10 only apply to clinical learning experiences involving direct patient care, and therefore do not apply to the skills lab setting.
- ❖ **Deans, directors, and coordinators are encouraged to use this guideline when electing to utilize CTAs and nursing skills lab assistants in their nursing programs.**

Please be aware that references to Rule 214 and Rule 215 are not all inclusive.