Arkansas Department of Health

Arkansas State Board of Nursing
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POSITION STATEMENT

97-2

Assistance with Self Medication for Unlicensed Persons

DEFINITIONS

Assistance with Medication-- Ancillary aid needed by an individual to self-administer oral medication, such as reminding the individual to take a medication at the prescribed time, opening and closing a medication container, returning a medication to the proper storage area, and assisting in reordering such medications from a pharmacy. Such ancillary aide shall not include calculation of medication dosage, or altering the form of the medication by crushing, dissolving, or any other method.

Setting: Location in which the purpose of the setting is other than the provision of health care such as an individual's residence which may include a group home or foster home as well as other settings including, but not limited to school, work or church where the individual participates in activities.

Cognitively Able: Awareness with perception, reasoning, intuition and memory.

Stable: A situation where the individual's clinical and behavioral status and care needs are non-fluctuating and consistent.

POSITION

The Arkansas State Board of Nursing is authorized by ACA § 17-87-203 to regulate nurses, and nursing education and practice and to promulgate regulations in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the public. Pursuant to ACA § 17-87-101, any person practicing nursing for compensation is required to hold nursing licensure. ACA § 17-87-102 allows the licensed nurse to delegate certain nursing practices to other personnel as set forth in regulations established by the Board.

Effective September 25, 1995, the Board promulgated Chapter 5 of the *Rules*- titled Delegation. Delegation is defined in Chapter 1 as entrusting the performance of a selected nursing task to an individual who is qualified, competent and able to perform such tasks. The nurse retains the accountability for the total nursing care of the individual.

This position statement provides a guideline to nurses who supervise and delegate tasks to unlicensed persons who provide assistance in order to assure that care is provided in a safe and effective manner.

A licensed nurse shall not delegate to any unlicensed person the administration of medication. An unlicensed person is not precluded from assisting an individual with the self-administration of oral medications in a setting where the purpose of the setting is other than the provision of health care. Assistance with self-medication by an unlicensed person may occur only as directed by physically impaired, cognitively able individuals with stable conditions. An unlicensed person assisting with the self-administration of medication may only do the following:

(1) Remind an individual when to take the medication and observe to ensure that the individual follows the directions on the container;

(2) Assist an individual in the self-administration of medication by taking the medication in its container from the area where it is stored and handing the container with the medication in it to the individual. If the individual is physically unable to open the container, the unlicensed person may open the container for the individual; and

(3) Assist, upon request by or with the consent of, a physically impaired but cognitively able individual, in removing oral medication from the container and in taking the medication. If an individual is physically unable to place a dose of oral medicine in the individual's mouth without spilling or dropping it, an unlicensed person may place the dose in another container and place that container to the mouth of the individual.

As set forth above, the assistance with self-administration of oral medication shall not constitute the practice of nursing in a setting where the purpose of the setting is other than the provision of health care.

Adopted May 7, 1997
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