



HB 2473/SB 6382

Creating a medication assistant endorsement for Nursing Assistants Certified (NACs) who work in nursing homes

Issue: Adoption of a program that permits the development of a classification of health care personnel to administer medications and treatments in skilled nursing facilities.

WHCA Position: WHCA supports the adoption of such a program wherein specially trained nursing assistants may assist patients in properly taking oral, topical, or inhaled prescriptions under appropriate licensed nursing supervision.

Rationale: The use of NACs certified as medication assistants will provide licensed nursing personnel more time for evaluating residents, collaborating with physicians or performing other, more technically demanding duties in order to improve services and enhance residents' quality of care. The goal of this legislation is to increase resident safety by allowing a trained and certified worker to administer medications and treatment to promote resident safety, and create an additional rung on the job ladder for NACs.

Background: In Washington State, non-licensed personnel are permitted to administer medications and treatments under nurse delegation in home and community-based care settings. Those provisions have been in place for over 15 years. This legislation implements a similar program in skilled nursing facilities, where currently only licensed nurses may administer medications and treatments. Twenty other states currently have medication assistants in nursing home settings. Research demonstrates safety in medication delivery, with no increase in errors based on licensure level.

The Nursing Commission unanimously voted to support the development of a program in Washington.

Bill Provisions: Creates an endorsement for Nursing Assistants Certified (NACs) to administer medications and perform treatments under the *direct supervision* of a licensed registered nurse beginning July 1, 2013. The legislation provides broad discretion for the Nursing Commission to promulgate rules governing the practice of medications assistants.

Tasks of the NAC with the endorsement:

- Administration of medications orally, topically and through inhalation;
- Performance of simple prescriber-ordered treatments, including blood glucose monitoring, noncomplex clean dressing changes, pulse oximetry reading and oxygen administration (to be defined by the Nursing Commission in rule);

An NAC with a medications endorsement may not:

- Accept telephone or verbal orders from a prescriber;
- Calculate medication dosages;
- Inject any medications;
- Perform any sterile task;
- Administer medications through a tube;
- Administer schedule I, II, or III controlled substances; or
- Perform tasks that require nursing judgment.

To qualify for the endorsement, a NAC must:

- Maintain ongoing certification as a nursing assistant
- Complete a minimum number of documented work hours to qualify (Experience level is established in rule by the Nursing Commission).
- Successfully complete an education and training program approved by the Commission by rule. The education program must include training on the specific tasks that are and are not permitted.
- Successfully complete an independently administered certification test.
- Successfully complete continuing competency requirements as established by the Nursing Commission in rule.