

## INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT REGARDING AUXILIARIES PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IN ADMINISTERING SEDATION OR ANESTHESIA

To protect the public interest, the North Carolina Board of Dental Examiners (Board) provides interpretation and guidance regarding acceptable standards of care on the issue of auxiliaries providing assistance in administering sedation or anesthesia.

A dentist may administer sedation or anesthesia with the proper permit (a "permittee") in accordance with 21 NCAC 16Q .0201, .0301, .0401, or .0404. As used in the Board's rules, to "administer" sedation or anesthesia means "to direct, manage, supervise, control, and have charge of all aspects of selection, dosage, timing, and method of delivery to the patient of any pharmacologic agent intended to reduce anxiety or depress consciousness." 21 NCAC 16Q .0101(5).

A permittee may utilize the assistance of "auxiliaries," or non-dentist staff members, in the permittee's administration of sedation or anesthesia in accordance with applicable laws and rules. 21 NCAC 16Q .0101(7). Based on their training and credentialing, such auxiliaries may assist the permittee to deliver the sedation or anesthesia to the patient. As used in the Board's rules, to "deliver" sedation or anesthesia means "to assist a permitted dentist in administering sedation or anesthesia drugs by providing the drugs to the patient pursuant to a direct order from the dentist and while under the dentist's direct supervision." 21 NCAC 16Q .0101(15).

### **Minimum Staffing Requirements During Sedation Procedures**

#### **General anesthesia:**

A dentist holding a general anesthesia permit may administer or supervise a CRNA to administer general anesthesia provided the permittee ensures the facility where the general anesthesia is administered is "staffed with at least two BLS certified auxiliaries, one of whom shall be dedicated to patient monitoring and recording general anesthesia or sedation data throughout the sedation procedure." 21 NCAC 16Q .0202(a)(6).

#### **Moderate conscious sedation:**

A dentist holding a moderate conscious sedation permit may administer or supervise a CRNA to administer or RN employed to deliver sedation provided the permittee ensures that, during the sedation procedure, the facility where the sedation is administered is "staffed with at least two BLS certified auxiliaries, one of whom shall be dedicated to patient monitoring and recording sedation data throughout the sedation procedure." 21 NCAC 16Q .0302(a)(6)(A).

#### **Moderate pediatric conscious sedation:**

A dentist holding a permit to administer moderate pediatric conscious sedation may administer sedation provided the permittee ensures that, during the sedation procedure, the facility where the sedation is administered is "staffed with at least two BLS certified auxiliaries, one of whom shall be dedicated to patient monitoring and recording sedation data throughout the sedation procedure." 21 NCAC 16Q .0405(a)(6)(A).

**Minimal conscious sedation:**

A dentist holding a minimal conscious sedation permit may administer or supervise a CRNA to administer minimal conscious sedation provided the permittee "maintain[s] under continuous direct supervision any auxiliary personnel, who shall be capable of assisting in procedures, problems, and emergencies incident to the use of minimal conscious sedation or secondary to an unexpected medical complication." 21 NCAC 16Q .0402(c)(2). Either the permittee or a BLS certified auxiliary under the permittee's direct supervision must monitor the patient's vital signs throughout the sedation procedure until the patient is recovered. .0402(f)(2).

In summary, a permittee administering general anesthesia, moderate conscious sedation, or moderate pediatric conscious sedation must ensure that, during the sedation procedure, there are at least two BLS certified auxiliaries in the facility, one of whom must be dedicated to patient monitoring and recording sedation data throughout the sedation. A permittee administering minimal conscious sedation is not required to involve a CRNA or any auxiliary personnel. However, any auxiliaries that are involved must be under the permittee's continuous direct supervision and must be capable of assisting in procedures, problems, and medical emergencies.

**Permissible Use of Auxiliaries and Providers**

Generally, a dentist may be assisted by ancillary personnel – dental hygienists or dental assistants – in providing direct patient care. GS § 90-42.2. A dental assistant may assist a dentist as a chairside assistant, provided the dental assistant does not perform acts that constitute the practice of dentistry or dental hygiene, 21 NCAC 16H .0201. A dental assistant providing chairside assistance to the dentist must have an unexpired CPR/BLS certification, but no license is required.

In addition, a dentist can delegate "to any person . . . those patient-care services which are routine, repetitive, limited in scope [and] do not require the professional judgment of a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse," without violating the restrictions on the practice of nursing. GS § 90-171.43(4) (Nurse Practice Act).

With respect to the administration of anesthesia or sedation, a dentist permittee remains in compliance by delegating to an auxiliary only those tasks that are routine, repetitive, limited in scope, and do not require independent professional judgment. Any such tasks may be delegated to an auxiliary only at the dentist permittee's specific direction, supervision, and observation. For example, the permittee may position the medication delivery device and prepare the proper dosage in the syringe(s). An unlicensed auxiliary may then provide the permittee with mechanical assistance by attaching the prepared medication syringe to the patient's delivery device and fully pushing the syringe plunger at the dentist permittee's specific direction, supervision, and observation. Additionally, while the permittee is performing the surgical or other procedure, an auxiliary also may deliver a partial, specific amount of medication from a syringe, provided the permittee: (1) personally prepares or draws the medication into the syringe; (2) instructs the auxiliary as to the exact volume and dosage to be delivered, and (3) observes the delivery and the corresponding reaction of the patient.

An auxiliary shall not provide any services concerning delivery of sedation and anesthesia that require independent decision-making or professional judgment, including but not limited to tasks such as preparing medication (e.g. drawing the proper dosage into a syringe) or delivering a partial dose from a prepared syringe except under the conditions noted above. The auxiliary may only provide needed manual support by functioning as a "third hand" for the permittee as noted herein and after being properly trained by the permittee to provide this assistance. The permittee retains full responsibility for the appropriate medication administration and accountability for outcomes.

A dentist permittee complies with the Board's rules by supervising an RN acting within the limits of the RN's scope of practice to assist in delivering sedation or general anesthesia. An RN also can serve as a BLS certified auxiliary dedicated to patient monitoring and recording sedation data.

A dentist permittee complies with the Board's rules by supervising a CRNA acting within the CRNA's scope of practice to administer sedation or general anesthesia up to the sedation level of the permit.

To maximize patient safety, the Dental Board encourages permittees to use the highest-level trained providers and auxiliaries as feasible in administering and delivering general anesthesia and sedation. The Board also recommends that permittees require auxiliaries assisting with delivering general anesthesia and sedation to obtain a certification or attend detailed training tailored to providing this type of assistance.