



Idaho Board of Nursing

Philosophy Statement

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthesiologist (CRNA)

The Idaho Board of Nursing is committed to public protection through accurate and appropriate scope of practice for licensing titles. The Board is also mindful that as new roles emerge in the health care industry, it is important to minimize confusion in these roles for the sake of public safety and well-being.

The Board accepts that the root definition of the word “anesthesiologist” means one who has studied and is an expert in the field of anesthesia. In contrast, an “anesthetist” is a technician or one who administers anesthesia. Given the graduate level academic preparation, advanced practice skill set, and autonomous level of responsibility, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are not merely technicians, and they often serve as the expert at their facilities regarding anesthesia.

Confusion has arisen regarding another group of anesthesia providers, known as Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAs), utilizing the term “anesthetist” for professional introductions and public marketing. AAs meet the technical definition of the term “anesthetist” or “technician”; however, AAs have vastly different foundational training, preparation, and experience when compared to nurses and physicians. Therefore, by educational preparation and law, they cannot function as independent providers.

It is both confusing and inaccurate to use the term “anesthetist” to equally identify a licensed and often autonomous provider with a provider who has a restricted skillset and who can only practice under the direction and delegation of a physician anesthesiologist. When the descriptor “nurse anesthesiologist” is used, audiences know that it is a professional nurse who is an expert in anesthesia and distinguishes nurse anesthesiologists, physician anesthesiologists, and dentist anesthesiologists from Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAs). It is paramount that patients and the public know who is delivering their care and use of the nurse anesthesiologist descriptor does just that: it identifies the foundational education of the provider and further identifies them as an expert in anesthesiology.

The Board believes that the “nurse anesthesiologist” descriptor does not seek to expand CRNA practice, demean another profession’s practice, nor misrepresent the position and foundational education of CRNAs. Rather, it provides a transparent term to accurately describe the CRNAs advanced practice nursing role, as well as the expertise in the provision of full-range and often autonomous anesthesia service, while helping to diminish patient confusion.

The Idaho Board of Nursing recognizes “Nurse Anesthesiologist” and “Certified Registered Nurse Anesthesiologist” as accurate descriptors for CRNAs. It is not a title change and is not an attempt to create an expanded or misleading scope of practice. It is a transparent and lawful term of address and introduction and is permitted for use on personal and professional communications without sanction.

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