

# LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

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Writer's Direct Dial:

January 10, 2017

(504) \_\_\_\_\_

RE: Physician Assistant in OR

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Dear :

During its December 2016 and January 2017 meetings, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners considered your inquiry related to physician assistants ("PAs") performing services in the operating room ("OR"). Specifically, have asked "are PAs allowed to perform any portion of a surgical procedure while a patient is under anesthesia without the SP present and under his or her direct supervision."<sup>1</sup> At its meeting this week, the Board asked that I acknowledge your inquiry, apologize for the delay in responding, and relay its advice.

As provided in the governing law,<sup>2</sup> a PA may perform such services as are within the scope of his or her education, training and experience, which are delegated by the supervising physician and performed under the direction and supervision of the physician.<sup>3</sup> While the level and method of supervision to be provided is at the physician and physician assistant level, a PA may not practice without supervision.<sup>4</sup> However, the law does not authorize a PA to perform a surgical procedure independent of the supervising physician. That, of course, would constitute the practice of medicine and could not be delegated by a supervising physician to a PA or any other non-physician for that matter.

Rather, consistent with the controlling law, a PA may *assist* a supervising physician in surgery.<sup>5</sup> Stated differently, PAs are not authorized to perform any portion of a surgical procedure, under the circumstances you describe, without the supervising physician in attendance. To the extent that a PA is called upon to assist his or her supervising physician in "surgery" such supervision would require, in the Board's view, the immediate, physical presence of the supervising physician in the operative suite or other location where the procedure is being performed.

Finally, it should be noted that a given hospital or institution, as a matter of credentialing and definition of clinical privileges, could properly impose clinical restrictions on PAs generally or on individual PAs, which would confine their services within the institution more narrowly than the scope of practice authorized by PA licensure.

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<sup>1</sup>Email to La. St. Bd. Med. Exam. (Nov. 14, 2016).

<sup>2</sup>La. Rev. Stat. §§37:1360.21-1360.38.

<sup>3</sup>La. Rev. Stat. §§37:1360.31.B; 1360.22(8).

<sup>4</sup>See Footnote 3.

<sup>5</sup>La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §37:1361.31(A).

Jan. 10, 2017

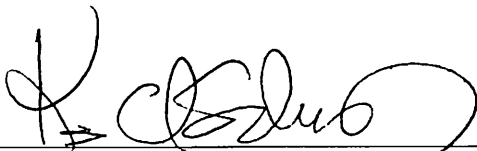
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There is, however, no requirement or process for a PA to seek Board approval for specific procedures as a condition to applying to a hospital for clinical privileges.

I trust that this is responsive to your inquiry. If not, please let us know.

Very truly yours,

**LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF  
MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

By:   
Keith C. Ferdinand, M.D., FACC, FAHA  
*Interim Executive Director*