

Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners

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RE: Physician Supervision;
Respiratory Care

During its most recent meeting the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (the "Board") considered your inquiries with respect to the supervision and direction of respiratory therapists. In particular, you have asked whether the Louisiana Respiratory Therapy Practice Act allows "the practice of respiratory therapy without the direction and supervision of a licensed physician?" You also wish to know whether Respiratory Care Departments should "be supervised and directed by other disciplines rather than a licensed physician?" The Board has asked that I acknowledge and thank you for your letter¹ and relay its advice.

The practice of respiratory care in this state is governed by the Louisiana Respiratory Therapy Practice Act, La. Rev. Stat. §§37:3351-3361 (the "Act") and the rules promulgated by the Board respecting respiratory care practitioners, La. Adm. C. 46XLV.2501-2551; 45.5501-5521. Pursuant to the Act a "licensed respiratory therapist" means "a person who is licensed by the Board to practice respiratory therapy under the *qualified medical direction and supervision of a physician*."² "Respiratory therapy" is defined as "[T]he allied health specialty practiced under the *direction and supervision of a physician* . . ."³

¹Corr., Ben Shuler, RRT, to La. St. Bd. Med. Exam. (Feb. 12, 2011).

²La. Rev. Stat. §37:3353(2). Emphasis supplied.

³La. Rev. Stat. §37:3353(5). Emphasis supplied. While respiratory therapy may be provided upon the prescription or order of an advanced practice registered nurse or physician assistant, respiratory therapy must be practiced under the

Accordingly, based on the unequivocal wording of the Act, it is the opinion of the Board that respiratory therapy may only be practiced under the direction and supervision of a physician. For the same reason, it would not be appropriate, indeed it would be unlawful, for a respiratory therapist to practice under the supervision and direction of a health care provider who is licensed in another discipline.

We trust the above is responsive to your inquiries. If not, please let us know.

Very truly yours,

**LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF
MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

By: 
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