



*The Voice for Arkansas Nurses*

# Committee for Health Policy Update (Part 2)

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## Bills that are now Acts...and what you need to know!

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The 90<sup>th</sup> Arkansas General Assembly was very active this year related to health policy. There were several bills enacted into law, which will take effect later this year (and some that did not make it through the legislative process). This is the second part of a two part newsletter with details about some of the health care related legislation that affects nursing and advanced nursing practice.

### Possibility of new providers on the horizon. . .

#### **Act 929 (was HB 1162) – Arkansas Graduate Registered Physician Act**

Sponsors: Senators Missy Irvin and Gary Stubblefield; Representatives Deborah Ferguson and Stephen Magie

Title: TO CREATE THE ARKANSAS GRADUATE REGISTERED PHYSICIAN ACT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Link to Act 929: <https://legiscan.com/AR/text/HB1162/2015>

**Overview:** HB 1162 was signed into law as Act 929 on April 02, 2015. This act allows graduates from accredited allopathic medical schools or osteopathic medical schools the ability to provide healthcare services under the supervision of a licensed physician.

Act 929 enacts the role of a new provider in the state of Arkansas. The “graduate registered physician” is a resident of Arkansas who has graduated from an accredited medical school but has not begun a residency program. The graduate registered physician is allowed to practice under the direct supervision of a licensed physician. Supervision is defined as overseeing the activities and accepting responsibilities for the services provided by the graduate registered physician. The physical presence of the supervising physician is mandatory in the clinical setting in which services are being provided. To be eligible, the graduate registered physician must have successfully completed Steps 1 and 2 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination, the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination, or the equivalent of both steps of an Arkansas State Medical Board-approved licensing examination within two years of graduation from medical school. The scope of authority of the graduate registered physician is very limited. The supervising physician must be identified on all orders for healthcare services as well as on all prescriptions ordered by the graduate registered physician. Essentially, the graduate registered physician is providing services such as completing history and physicals, ordering diagnostic testing, formulating diagnoses, and prescribing medications, but all under the watchful eye of the supervising physician who remains responsible for the actions of the graduate.

Act 929 is not competitive with the role of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in the state as the scope of practice is vastly different. While APRNs have mandated collaborative practice agreements, collaborative is defined differently than supervision in Act 929. APRNs practice more autonomous within their scope as providers than is allowed within the scope of practice for the graduate registered physician. The intention of Act 929 is to provide a site for graduated physicians, who have been out of medical school for less than two years, to practice their skills while waiting on a residency.

# Or Not...a Bill that died in Committee...

## HB 1120 – Arkansas Anesthesiologist Assistant Act

Sponsor: Representative Stephen Magie

Title: TO ESTABLISH THE ARKANSAS ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT ACT; TO PROVIDE THE LICENSURE OF ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Link to HB 1120: <https://legiscan.com/AR/text/HB1120/2015>

**Overview:** HB 1120 died in House Committee on January 21, 2015. This bill was introduced to create the role of anesthesiologist assistant as well as a licensure for the role.

HB 1120 attempted to introduce a new provider in anesthesiology services as the anesthesiologist assistant (AA). The AA would be a graduate of an approved education program of anesthesiologist assistants that would need approval by the Arkansas State Medical Board. The AA would require direct supervision of the anesthesiologist. Direct supervision is defined as the physical presence of the anesthesiologist when and where anesthesiology services are provided.

The provision of services provided by the AA are similar to services provided by the certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). Healthcare services include the collection of history and physical, pretest and calibration of anesthesia delivery systems, implementation of monitoring techniques, establishment of basic and advanced airway interventions including intubations, administration of anesthetic, adjuvant and accessory medications, assistance with the performance of epidural anesthetic procedures, as well as the administration of blood and supportive fluid therapies. The AA would also be responsible for the recognition and management of corrective actions for abnormal patient responses to anesthesia, adjunctive medication, and healthcare services performed in post-anesthesia recovery area.

There are vast differences in the educational preparation of the AA versus the CRNA. HB 1120 would have allowed the Arkansas State Medical Board to examine, license, and renew the licenses of qualified applicants to the AA program. The bill did not address the level of education required for AA applicants or the educational components of the proposed AA program. Currently, CRNAs in Arkansas are educated at the master's level and programs only admit students who have multiple hours of critical care experience. The CRNA works autonomously within the healthcare arenas of the operating room and the post-anesthesia recovery room, with collaboration versus supervision. The AA would require direct supervision with less educational preparation. The role of the AA may be similar to the role of the CRNA; however, the educational preparation of the CRNA far exceeds the requirements of supervision of the AA role.

Have a wonderful summer! Stay informed and educate others. Watch for more Health Policy Updates coming soon!