



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Under Secretary for Health
Washington DC 20420

June 8, 2015

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Roybal-Allard:

Thank you for your June 3, 2015, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding your support for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) draft policy to recognize the Full Practice Authority (FPA) of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

Within the draft nursing handbook, VHA is proposing the authorization of FPA for APRNs without regard to the individual State Practice Acts, except for the dispensing, prescribing, and administration of controlled substances. This proposed change to nursing policy would standardize APRN practices throughout VA's health care system and increase access to high quality care for all Veterans. Implementation of FPA would increase patient access by alleviating the effects of national health care provider shortages on VA staffing levels and enable VA to provide additional health care services in medically-underserved areas.

The 2010 Institute of Medicine (IOM) landmark report, "The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health," recommended the removal of scope-of-practice barriers to allow APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification. IOM's recommendation prompted VHA to propose this policy. VHA's proposed nursing handbook is consistent with IOM's recommendation to remove scope-of-practice barriers, including the variation in APRN practice that exists across VHA as a result of disparate state regulations. As an integrated Federal health care system, the proposed policy will parallel current policies in the Department of Defense and the Indian Health Service. VHA's proposed policy is also consistent with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Consensus Model and includes all APRN roles.

The VHA Nursing Handbook that in part authorized FPA for APRNs was reviewed by the Office of General Counsel (OGC). OGC determined a regulation is required before the Handbook can be published and operationalized. The APRN regulation has been drafted and is presently in the VA concurrence process. The regulation will then be published in the Federal Register as a proposed rule for notice and comment. Following the public comment period, VA will render a decision on the policy.

VHA also conducted a robust literature review focused on the quality and safety of granting FPA for APRNs. VHA welcomes the opportunity to be transparent with regard to health care delivery decisions and specifically, the opportunity to discuss policy concerns.

Page 2.

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard

If you require additional information, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Tony Adams, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-6473 or by email at Tony.Adams@va.gov.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carolyn M. Clancy, MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small "MD" at the end.

Carolyn M. Clancy, MD
Interim Under Secretary for Health