

## VA National Standards of Practice: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The FAQs are intended to provide VA employees with answers to overarching questions regarding the development of national standards of practice (NSP). Note, these FAQs do not address occupation specific questions.

### General

#### What are national standards of practice (NSPs)?

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national standards of practice are a standardized set of services that all health care professionals in a given occupation can perform regardless of what is permitted by a State license, certification, or registration. The services or tasks are incorporated into the individual's privileges, scope of practice, or functional statement, if the facility performs such services and the individual has the proper education, training, and skill.

#### Why is VA developing national standards of practice?

- VA is developing national standards to ensure consistent, safe, high-quality care for our Nation's Veterans in VA's integrated health care system and to ensure VA health care professionals can meet the needs of Veterans when practicing within the scope of their VA employment. This will also allow VA health care professionals to move seamlessly throughout the organization to provide support during disasters and times of national crisis, advancing VA's 4<sup>th</sup> mission.

#### Does VA have authority to develop national standards of practice?

- VA confirmed its authority, through an [interim final rule](#), under Article VI, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution in November 2020. The rule confirms the ability of VA health care professionals to practice their VA health care occupation in any State and establishes that VA will develop national standards of practice via policy for each occupation irrespective of conflicting State requirements.
- VA will also publish a National Standards of Practice directive and each occupation's specific national standard of practice will be an appendix to the directive.

#### How will the national standards of practice ensure patient safety?

- NSPs ensure health care professionals perform duties in line with their education and experience. Duties and tasks outlined in NSPs are incorporated into an individual health care professional's privileges, scope of practice, or functional statement if the facility performs such services and the individual has the proper education, training, and skill. NSPs will not change the way most VA health care professionals practice health care.

#### Which health care occupations will have national standards of practice?

- VA is developing national standards of practice for approximately 50 health care occupations. A full list [can be found here](#). The occupations are subject to change as VA explores complexities and State variance in health care occupations.

#### How are the national standards of practice being developed?

- VA health care workgroups were established to review State licensure, certification, and registration requirements to identify enhancements to the practice of the profession at VA medical facilities.

## Who are the stakeholders involved with developing the national standards of practice?

- The national standards of practice are in development by workgroups spearheaded by applicable program offices and VHA personnel, such as physicians, allied health professionals, and subject matter experts. Workgroups within each occupation solicit input from applicable internal and external stakeholders, to include unions, professional associations, VSOs, and members of Congress.
- The development process also includes additional opportunities for internal VA employee feedback via the [NSP Employee Participation and Review SharePoint](#) and external engagement via publication of the proposed national standards of practice in the Federal Register for public comment. VA will directly engage with State Licensing Boards and our labor partners. For more details on the development process, see the [process map](#).

## Employee Input and Impact

### How do I provide input on the VA national standards of practice?

- The standards will be posted for 60 days on the [NSP Employee Participation and Review SharePoint](#) for comment. Employees can be alerted when a standard has been posted for comment by signing up for the NSP Newsletter on the [NSP Public Website](#). For more details on the development process, see the [process map](#).
- All comments provided will be reviewed by the program offices and the NSP will be revised based on the feedback as appropriate.

### When will the national standards of practice become effective and when will my role change?

- The date of publication and implementation of each NSP of practice will vary by occupation. The NSP initiative launched in November 2020 and will continue over the next few years, with timeframes varying for occupations depending on State variation and complexity.
- VA will provide additional details to employees as the NSPs are finalized. Please review the notional timeline deck in the [VA NSP Employee SharePoint](#) on SharePoint.
- VA will publish each occupational NSP as part of a single comprehensive NSP Directive. All NSPs will be included in the directive, and the effective date will allow for comprehensive implementation planning.

### Will the national standards of practice apply to all health care professionals at VA?

- The VA national standards of practice are exclusively for VA employees with license, certification, or registration practicing within the scope of their VA employment and do not include contractors or community care providers.

### How do I learn more about my occupation's standards?

- VA employees can sign up for the NSP newsletter through the [NSP Public Website](#) to receive alerts on when NSPs will be available for review and feedback.

### What if I am part of a union?

- VA is committed to ensuring the National Unions are engaged in the process of developing national standards of practice. VA is meeting with all relevant unions to provide information on the impact of the proposed national standard of practice on the specific occupation.

## State Licensing Boards

### Will State licenses still be required for VA employment?

- Yes, all licensed providers within VHA must maintain their State licensure as a condition of employment. If they allow their license to lapse, have their license revoked, or relinquish their license in lieu of revocation, they may be immediately terminated from VA employment.
- Similarly, all certified and registered health care professionals must maintain their credentials as outlined by VA's qualification standards in [VA Handbook 5005](#), Staffing.

### How am I protected from State boards?

- VA is committed to ensuring State Boards are aware and engaged in the process to develop national standards of practice. VA will send every relevant State Board a letter with information on the impact of the proposed national standard of practice on the specific State, with an opportunity for the State Board to discuss with VA.
- VA and Department of Justice (DoJ) can represent the employee operating under their national standard of practice, including where inconsistent with State standards, absent misconduct or negligence from the employee.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Legal Authority:** [38 CFR 17.419](#) confirms VA's authority under Article VI, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution to allow VA health care professionals to practice their VA health care occupation in any State and for VA to develop National Standards of Practice for each occupation irrespective of conflicting State requirements.

For more information and resources, please visit the [NSP Employee SharePoint](#)