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Scope of Nurse Anesthesia Practice

Professional Role

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthesiologists (CRNAs) are advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) licensed as independent practitioners who plan and deliver anesthesia, pain management, and related care to patients of all health complexities across the lifespan. As autonomous healthcare professionals, CRNAs collaborate with the patient and a variety of healthcare professionals in order to provide safe patient-centered high-quality, holistic, evidence-based and cost-effective care.

CRNAs practice in hospitals, nonoperating room anesthetizing areas, ambulatory surgical centers, and office-based settings. They provide all types of anesthesia-related care for surgical, diagnostic, and therapeutic procedures. CRNAs provide anesthesia for all specialties including, but not limited to, general, obstetric, trauma, cardiac, orthopedic, gastrointestinal, dental, and plastic surgery. CRNAs administer anesthesia care to patients in urban, suburban, and rural locations in the U.S., and are often the sole anesthesia professionals delivering care to the military, rural, and medically underserved populations. CRNAs serve as leaders, clinicians, researchers, educators, mentors, advocates, and administrators.

Education, Licensure, Certification, and Accountability

Before entering graduate education in nurse anesthesia, CRNAs must be licensed registered nurses with critical care nursing experience. As of 2025, all CRNA program graduates receive a doctoral degree in nurse anesthesia practice. Building on this critical care foundation, CRNAs successfully complete a comprehensive didactic and clinical practice curriculum at a nurse anesthesia program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. Graduates are certified as CRNAs following successful completion of the National Certification Examination. CRNAs are accountable to the public for professional excellence through lifelong learning and practice, continued certification, continuous engagement in quality improvement and professional development, and compliance with the [Standards for Nurse Anesthesia Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist](#).

CRNAs exercise independent, professional judgment within their scope of practice. They are accountable for their services and actions and for maintaining individual clinical competence. The scope of an individual CRNA's practice is determined by education, experience, local, state and federal law, and organization policy.

Clinical Anesthesia Practice

The practice of anesthesiology is a recognized nursing and medical specialty unified by the same standards of care. Nurse anesthesia practice may include, but is not limited to, the services in Table 1.

Table 1. Nurse Anesthesia Scope of Practice*

Preoperative / Preprocedure	Intraoperative / Intraprocedure	Postoperative / Postprocedure	Pain Management	Other Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide patient education and counseling • Perform a comprehensive preanesthetic history and physical examination, assessment and evaluation, distinct from a complete medical history and physical (H&P) • Conduct a preanesthesia assessment and evaluation • Develop a comprehensive patient-specific plan for anesthesia, analgesia, multimodal pain management, and recovery • Obtain informed consent for anesthesia and pain management • Select, order, prescribe and administer preanesthetic medications, including controlled substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a patient-specific plan of care, which may involve anesthetic techniques, such as general, regional and local anesthesia, sedation, and multimodal pain management, while continuously monitoring and maintaining vital signs and level of consciousness throughout the intraoperative period • Select, order, prescribe and administer anesthetic medications, including controlled substances, adjuvant drugs, accessory drugs, fluids, and blood products • Select and insert invasive and noninvasive monitoring modalities (e.g., central venous access, arterial lines, cerebral oximetry, bispectral index monitor, transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate emergence and recovery from anesthesia • Select, order, prescribe and administer postanesthetic medications, including controlled substances • Conduct postanesthesia evaluation • Educate the patient related to recovery, regional analgesia and continued multimodal pain management • Discharge from the postanesthesia care area or facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive patient-centered pain management to optimize recovery. • Provide acute pain services, including multimodal pain management and opioid-sparing techniques, supporting both surgical anesthesia and postoperative pain management • Provide anesthesia and analgesia using regional techniques for obstetric and other acute pain management • Provide advanced pain management, including acute, chronic, and interventional pain management; for more information on chronic pain management, please see the AANA Chronic Pain Management Guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe medications, including controlled substances (e.g., pain management, medication-assisted treatment, adjuvants to psychotherapy) • Provide emergency, critical care, and resuscitation services • Perform advanced airway management • Perform point-of-care testing • Order, evaluate, and interpret diagnostic laboratory and radiological studies (e.g., chest x-ray, 12-lead EKG, TEE) • Use and supervise the use of ultrasound, fluoroscopy, and other technologies for diagnosis and care delivery • Provide sedation and pain management for palliative care • Order consults, treatments or services related to the patient's care (e.g., physical and occupational therapy)

**These services are listed in table format for ease of reference. The table is not intended to be all inclusive or limit the services to specified phases of patient care. CRNA scope of practice is dynamic and evolving. CRNA clinical privileges should reflect the full scope of CRNA practice evidenced by individual credentials and performance.*

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51 **Leadership, Advocacy, and Policymaking**

52 CRNAs provide pivotal healthcare leadership in roles such as chief executive officer, administrator,
53 manager, anesthesia services director, board member, anesthesia practice owner, national and
54 international researcher, educator, mentor, and advocate. CRNAs are innovative leaders in the delivery of
55 cost-effective, evidence-based anesthesia and pain management, integrating critical thinking, ethical
56 judgment, quality data, scientific research, and emerging technologies to optimize patient outcomes.

57
58 As demand for expert healthcare and anesthesia services accelerates, advocacy activities continue to
59 target supporting the full scope of nurse anesthesia practice. CRNAs engage in healthcare advocacy and
60 policymaking at the facility, local, state, national, and international level. They also participate in
61 professional associations focusi7894R8ng on patient access to quality and affordable care.

62
63 **The Future of Nurse Anesthesia Practice**

64 The CRNA scope of practice evolves to meet the demands of the ever-changing healthcare environment
65 and increasing patient and procedure complexity. As their record of safe, high-quality, cost-effective care
66 demonstrates, CRNAs will continue to lead in the delivery of patient-centered compassionate anesthesia
67 and pain management care.

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69 For additional information and supporting documents, see [Clinical Privileges and Other Responsibilities of](#)
70 [Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists](#), [Professional Practice Documents](#), and [Publications and Research](#).

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