

Scope of Practice: Who Should Do What to Assure High Quality, Efficient Health Care . . . And How Can States Decide?

Evidence-Based Health Policy Project Briefing

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Recently, most states have demonstrated elevated interest in the potential to expand the scope of practice for a wide variety of skilled health care professionals -- nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychologists, dental hygienists, pharmacists, physical therapists, optometrists and others.

Advocates argue that practitioners working at the “top of their license” provide high quality, cost-effective care, and increase access to care, especially for vulnerable populations. Opponents question whether the education and training is sufficient for the expanded practice demands. Too often, these debates devolve into turf battles, leaving legislators and the public without adequate information. Could an improved scope of practice decision-making process assist in promoting and maintaining an effective, high quality health care workforce in Wisconsin that can meet growing population needs along with the demands of an evolving health care delivery system?

This briefing will examine

- The ways in which other states have developed evidence-based processes for considering modifications of scopes of practice;
- Research regarding the impacts of expanding scope of practice, including quality, patient safety, access to care, and cost containment;
- How provider scope of practice might evolve as new care models – such as medical home, retail clinics, disease management – develop.

SPEAKERS:

- Dr. Ned Colange, Interim Director of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and Chair of Governor Ritter’s Collaborative Scopes of Care Task Force
- Catherine Dower, J.D., Associate Director of Research, Center for the Health Professions, University of California, San Francisco
- Cindy Greenlaw Benton, Minnesota Health Occupations Review Program