

## Scope of Practice Laws for Nurse Delegation Are Associated with Turnover Among Licensed Practical Nurses Working in Home Health

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### Objective/Issue

Nursing turnover can compromise the quality and continuity of home health care. An important driver of job satisfaction among nurses is autonomy, defined as a nurse's ability to make decisions that are informed by their education and experience. Scope of practice laws, which determine the tasks nurses are allowed to perform and delegate, are a key element of autonomy and vary considerably across states. Yet it is unclear whether scope of practice laws are associated with turnover among nurses.

### Data/Setting

This study used proprietary, administrative data provided by one of the largest home health organizations in the US. We obtained human resource records tracking the hiring date and termination date (if applicable) for employees between January 2016 and December 2018.

### Design/Methods

Our dependent variable was state-level turnover rates in 2016, 2017, and 2018 for RNs and LPNs, with turnover defined as the number of RNs (LPNs) who left their position (voluntarily or involuntarily) divided by the total number of RNs (LPNs) working in that year. The independent variable of interest was the number of tasks that could be delegated to unlicensed aides, which is tracked by AARP's Long-Term Services and Supports State Scorecard.

### Results/Findings

When we considered task delegation as a continuous variable, the relationships between task delegation and turnover of RNs and LPNs were not statistically significant. When we characterized task delegation as a binary indicator, categorizing states in the top half of the distribution of the number of tasks that can be delegated (14+ tasks), we found that turnover rates of LPNs were lower in states that allowed more tasks to be delegated to home health and personal care aides. In terms of magnitude, turnover among LPNs was nearly 15% less in states where licensed nurses could delegate more tasks, which was consistent across specifications (all  $p < .05$ ). However, there was no association between task delegation and the turnover rates of RNs.

### Conclusions/Discussion:

While there was no significant relationship between task delegation and turnover among registered nurses, we found that more task delegation correlated with lower turnover rates for licensed practical nurses, which may be driven by a different workload for licensed practical nurses when registered nurses can delegate more tasks to unlicensed aides. These results point to a potential and unexplored benefit of expanding scope of practice for nurses.

### Related Resources:

- “The Role of Schedule Volatility in Home Health Nursing Turnover,” by Alon Bergman, Hummy Song, Guy David, Joanne Spetz, & Molly Candon. *Medical Care Research and Review*, 79 (3): 382-393. doi:[10.1177/10775587211034310](https://doi.org/10.1177/10775587211034310)
- Abstract from [presentation at the American Society of Health Economists Annual Conference](#), June, 2022:
- Abstract from [presentation at the Gerontological Society of America Conference](#), 2020

### Key Words:

nursing turnover, scope of practice, home health care

### Journal Article:

“The Relationship Between Scope of Practice Laws for Task Delegation and Nurse Turnover in Home Health” by Molly Candon, Alon Bergman, Amber Rose, Hummy Song, Guy David, & Joanne Spetz. *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2023.07.023>