

REGISTERED NURSE FIRST ASSISTANTS

The RN first assistant (RNFA) is a perioperative registered nurse who works with the surgeon and health care team members to provide safe and accurate care to patients. Intraoperatively, the RN first assistant practices at the direction of the surgeon and should not concurrently function as a scrub nurse.

RN first assistant behaviors in the perioperative arena may include:

- preoperative patient management with other health care providers, including but not limited to,
 - performing preoperative evaluation focused nursing assessment,
 - communicating/collaborating with other health care providers regarding the patient plan of care, and
 - writing preoperative orders according to established protocols of the physician and/or facility
- intraoperative surgical first-assisting, including but not limited to,
 - using instruments/medical devices,
 - providing exposure,
 - handling and/or cutting tissue,
 - providing hemostasis, and
 - suturing; and
 - harvesting veins
- postoperative patient management with other health care providers in the immediate postoperative period and beyond, including but not limited to,
 - writing postoperative orders/operative notes according to established protocols of the physician and/or facility.
 - participating in postoperative rounds, and
 - assisting with discharge planning and identifying appropriate community resources as needed.

(Adopted from the AORN official statement on RN First Assistants.)

The education and development of the RN first assistant builds upon the educational preparation leading to licensure as an RN. The RN first assistant must then acquire the necessary knowledge, judgment and skills specific to the expanded role through a formal RN first assistant educational program.

The Iowa Board of Nursing has adopted the qualifications for entry into RNFA practice as defined by the Association of Operating Room Nurses (AORN).

When education and clinical requirements have been met, the RNFA is encouraged to obtain and maintain certification (CRNFA).