



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

**South Carolina Board of Nursing**

P.O. Box 12367 • Columbia, SC 29211

Phone: 803-896-4550 • Fax: 803-896-4515 • [www.llronline.com/POL/nursing/](http://www.llronline.com/POL/nursing/)



**ADVISORY OPINION # 15**

**FORMULATED:** July 31, 1987

**REVISED:** July 2007, August 2001, May 1993

**REVIEWED:** March 2011, May 2006, July 2005, July 1998, January 1997, March 1992

**QUESTION:** Is it within the role and scope of responsibilities of the registered nurse (RN) in the emergency department of a health care agency to be responsible for patient triage and discharge from the emergency department without physician order?

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina acknowledges that it is within the role and scope of responsibilities of the RN to perform patient triage in the Emergency Department. The nurse's responsibility for triage requires the use of judgment in identifying the patient's health problem and estimating its severity in determining priority of patient need.

Since it is not the role of the RN to establish medical diagnoses, it is therefore not within the role and scope of responsibilities of the RN to discharge patients from the Emergency Department without a physician's order. Only an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) may discharge from the emergency department working with collaborative written protocols from a physician preceptor.

*This statement is an advisory opinion of the Board of Nursing as to what constitutes competent and safe nursing practice.*