



Safe Practice Advisory from the OPWDD Central Mortality Review Committee

Plan of Nursing Service (PONS)

What is the Purpose of a PONS?

The purpose of a PONS is to provide instruction to direct support professional (DSP) staff regarding care that must be provided to individuals receiving services, what the DSPs should report to a Registered Nurse (RN), and when to call for help.

A PONS is written by an RN for any condition that requires a DSP to perform delegated nursing tasks such as treatments, interventions, or administration of medication. A PONS is **not** required for every diagnosis or condition an individual presents. A PONS is required only for those diagnoses or conditions that have delegated nursing tasks associated with them. For those diagnoses or conditions that do not have a delegated nursing task associated with them, a fact sheet can be used to provide education to the DSPs.

What Conditions and Tasks Require a PONS?

A PONS is written for any diagnoses or conditions that require DSPs to administer a medication or perform a treatment or intervention. Examples of diagnoses for which a PONS is written include Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), Diabetes, and Seizure Disorder. Diagnoses also include short-term conditions, such as flu or pneumonia.

Tasks requiring a PONS may include:

Medication Administration

It is likely diagnoses such as GERD, Diabetes, or Seizure Disorder require medication administration. Therefore, each of these conditions would require a PONS. The PONS should reference the name of the medication. For example, a PONS for Diabetes may state, "administer Metformin per physician's orders." It is not recommended that the specific dosage be included in the PONS, because any time there is a dosage change, the RN would need to update the PONS.

A PONS may also include directives to administer PRN and emergency medications (e.g., Glucagon, EpiPen, etc.). If the DSP is required to administer an emergency medication, the PONS must identify circumstances when the emergency medication is to be used and provide detailed instructions on actions to take once the medication has been administered.

Interventions

A PONS is also required when a diagnosis requires an intervention. An example of an intervention would be performing a fingerstick to check the blood glucose level for an individual diagnosed with Diabetes. A PONS for checking blood glucose would include the following:

- Equipment needs
- Step by step instructions for use of the glucometer -- how to turn it on, check the code, insert the test strip, and read the results
- Physician-established parameters for the individual's glucose level
- Handwashing and/or application of gloves
- Use of the lancet
- How to obtain the drop of blood
- Required documentation
- Any other reporting, such as abnormal levels, signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia, illness, etc., specified by the RN

Treatments

Examples of treatments requiring a PONS include use of a nebulizer or respiratory inhaler and instructions on how to use the devices. Application of physician ordered skin treatments must also require a PONS.

What Information Must be Included in all PONS?

Required components of a PONS include:

- Diagnosis. Any diagnosed medical condition that is being treated, and a brief, clear, and easy to understand description
- What to do (i.e., tasks and directions)
- What to watch for (i.e., signs, symptoms, precautions)
- Direction on when to call the RN and what to report
- Date and signature of the RN who wrote and/or updated the PONS

All PONS must also include the following directives:

- If any event occurs that causes concern for the individual's well-being, immediately notify the RN
- If any event occurs that may represent a threat to the individual's health/well-being, immediately call 911

Training and Communication.

An RN is responsible for developing the PONS and providing education to DSPs prior to PONS implementation and as changes occur. It is also important that the DSPs periodically review the PONS and understand their responsibilities in carrying out delegated nursing tasks and communicating with the RN in accordance with the PONS.

It is important to remember that any time a DSP feels the person is “not themselves” or not medically well, regardless of how minor it may seem, and regardless of whether or not there is a PONS in place, it is that DSP’s responsibility to notify the RN.

It is also important to remember that while many providers employ Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) to provide services, only an RN is authorized to develop the PONS and provide oversight for delegated nursing services carried out by DSPs.

Training on PONS is available to provider agencies on the OPWDD Statewide Learning Management System (SLMS) [SLMS - New York Statewide Learning Management System \(ny.gov\)](#)

Relevant OPWDD Requirements

The following Administrative Directive Memorandums (ADMs) include PONS requirements in facilities and services certified by OPWDD:

- ADM 2003-01: Registered Nursing Supervision of Unlicensed Direct Care Staff in Residential Facilities Certified by the [OPWDD]. Applicable in OPWDD certified residential programs, except family care homes, where two or more individuals receive services. (Note that regulations in section 635-10.4 of 14 NYCRR Part 635 also include a PONS requirement for all supervised CRs and IRAs.) [Administrative Memorandum #2003-01](#)
- ADM 2008-01: Registered Nursing Supervision of Unlicensed Direct Care Staff Providing Services to [Individuals] Receiving Respite Services in Free Standing Respite Centers. Applicable to OPWDD certified IRA/FSRs [Administrative Memorandum - #2008-01 \(ny.gov\)](#)
- ADM 2015-03: Registered Professional Nurse Supervision of Unlicensed Direct Support Professionals in Programs Approved by OPWDD. Applicable to OPWDD services provided by RNs and DSPs to individuals receiving HCBS in their private homes and while accompanying them in community settings that are not certified by OPW [Administrative Memorandum #2015-03](#)

Any questions concerning the contents of this document can be directed to quality@opwdd.ny.gov