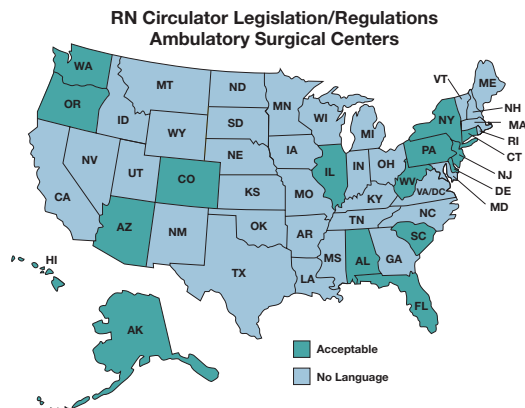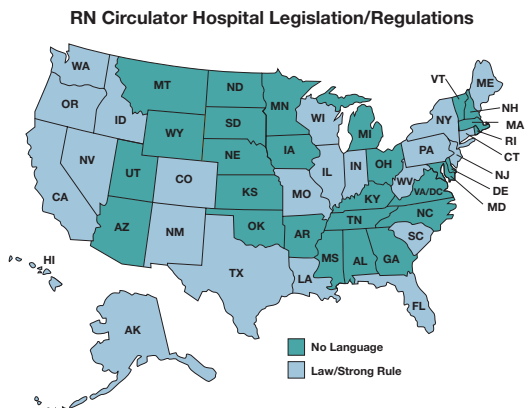# Need for RN Circulator Legislation

In the operating room, most patients are anesthetized or sedated and are powerless to make decisions on their own behalf. The circulating nurse serves as the patient advocate while the patient is most vulnerable.

One circulating nurse is dedicated to each patient for the duration of each surgery. The circulating nurse is responsible for managing all nursing care within the operating room, observing the surgical team from a broad perspective, and assisting the team to create and maintain a safe, comfortable environment for the patient's surgery. Immediately prior to and during operative procedures, circulating nurses are responsible for:

- Completing and verifying surgical documents
- Verifying patient identification
- Ensuring correct site, correct procedure surgery
- Assessing the patient for allergies and other preexisting conditions
- Preparing and positioning patients for surgery
- Overseeing blood transfusions

- Maintaining infection control throughout the procedure
- Monitoring high-tech activities such as arterial lines, electrosurgical and laser devices, and video and imaging equipment
- Performs counts of surgical items prior to the operation and after to ensure none are retained in the patient.

The circulating nurse is also responsible for coordinating activities in the event of an emergency. In short, the circulating nurse is the 'critical thinker,' preparing for and responding to all situations that affect patient care and safety throughout operative procedures.

23 states have laws mandating that a RN serve as circulator. 16 states have similar laws governing ASCs.

RN Circulator Hospital Legislation/Regulations

No Language
Law/Strong Rule

RN Circulator Legislation/Regulations Ambulatory Surgical Centers

Acceptable
No Language

AORN represents the interests of 160,000 perioperative registered nurses, including over 41,000 registered nurse members in the United States and abroad who facilitate the management, teaching, and practice of perioperative nursing, are engaged in perioperative research, are enrolled in nursing education, and perioperative nurses who work in related business and industry sectors.

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