



## RN TELE-NURSING AND TELEPHONE TRIAGE

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**Website:** **Telephone Medical Advice Services Bureau**  
<http://www.dca.ca.gov/tmas/>

### **Introduction:**

The public is being directed by health care insurers, providers, and private businesses to have their health care questions answered by registered nurses. Individuals contact the Board with questions regarding who can carry out telephone interactions with patients about health symptoms, conditions, or concerns.

Callers often indicate that they participate in activities termed tele-nursing or triage, however the descriptions vary. Callers describe activities that involve interviewing and assessing the condition of the patient and determining the appropriate intervention. The intervention may be counseling the patient to administer self-care at home, advising the patient to go immediately to an urgent care or emergency room setting, or utilizing a protocol (standardized procedure) to advise the client of a specific treatment or to generate a predetermined prescription for the patient.

The Board of Registered Nursing receives many inquires from nurses, associations and the public about the RN's legal authority to provide telephone nursing advice and/or nursing telephone triage services. The Business and Professions Code, Nursing Practice Act, Section 2725 provides the authority for registered nursing practice. The BRN interprets RN scope of practice to include tele-nursing and telephone triage.

A California RN license is required for in-state or out-of state RNs to perform telephone medical advice services to California addresses. It is incumbent upon the RN to be knowledgeable and competent in the practice when offering telephonic assessment, evaluation, referral, or advice to patients or their family members.

### **Background:**

Effective January 2000, a new law titled "Telephone Medical Advice Services" was added to the California Business and Profession Code, Chapter 15, Section 4999-4999.9. Chapter 15 of the Business and Professions Code requires businesses that employ at least 5 full time equivalent employees in-state or out-of-state that provide telephone medical advice to California addresses to register with the Telephone Medical Advice Services Bureau, Department of Consumer Affairs. All personnel who provide telephone medical advice at these businesses must be appropriately registered or licensed healthcare professionals in California. To protect the California healthcare consumers, the law and regulations require providers of telephone medical advice to maintain records of telephone medical advice services including complaints for at least 5 years. The telephone medical advice business is charged with ensuring the telephone medical advice they provide is consistent with good professional judgment.

### **Definition:**

"Telephone medical advice" means a telephonic communication between a patient and a health care professional, wherein the health care professional's primary function is to provide the patient a telephonic response to the patient's questions regarding his or her or a family member's medical care or treatment.

Board of Registered Nursing: general information (916) 322-3350 and website: [www.rn.ca.gov](http://www.rn.ca.gov)