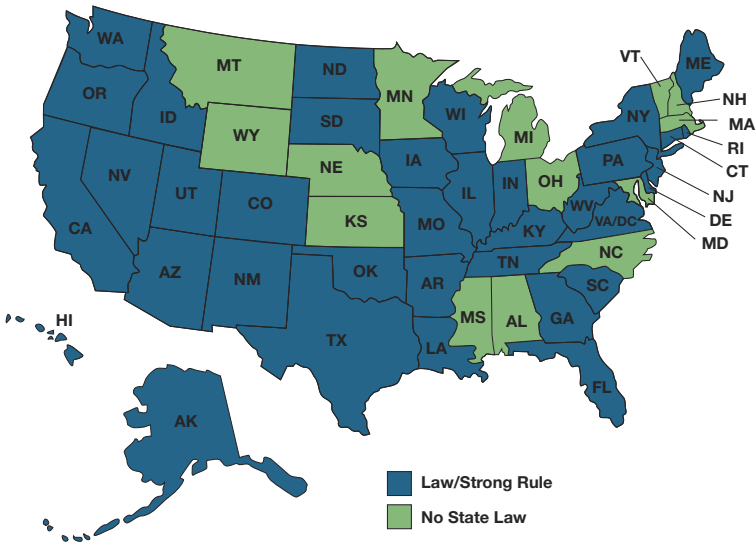




# PROTECTING PATIENT SAFETY IN OPERATING ROOMS

## RN Circulator Legislation/Regulations



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 the patient for surgery (eg skin antisepsis & positioning)

## NEED FOR RN CIRCULATOR LEGISLATION

RN circulators improve patient safety and outcomes by leading the team in **preventing surgical site infections, medication errors, wrong-site/wrong-patient/wrong-procedure surgeries, and retained surgical items.**

Many studies show a high correlation of appropriate nursing presence to improved patient safety and outcomes.

**Over 30 states have laws or regulations** addressing the importance of the role of the registered nurse circulator in operating room safety. **Vermont is not one of them.**

As hospitals and ambulatory surgical facilities continue to face cost pressures, passage of legislation will guard against shortcuts taken in Vermont operating rooms.

- Maintaining infection control throughout the procedure
- Monitoring the performance of electrosurgical and laser devices, video equipment used in laproscopic procedures, and robotic devices as well as overall high-tech equipment functionality
- Performing 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.

