

AASM STANDARDS “Technologist Staffing”

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF SLEEP MEDICINE

Standard

Technologists staffing and support is sufficient to a) address the anticipated workload for patients being assessed by the laboratory and b) to assure the safety of all patients and staff within the physical confines of the laboratory.

Intent and Limitations

Workload: Workload for a particular technologist depends upon the complexity of patients being studied, the number of patients, anticipated or potential interventions (i.e. standard operating procedures), the type (s) of study (ies), the capabilities of the technologist and the availability of additional personnel. All tasks and duties that the technologist performs or may be required to perform, even those not specifically related to the performance of overnight polysomnography within the facility, must be included in the assessment of the workload.

Safety: Safety is a separate but related issue and must be considered in the determination of workload. There must be sufficient personnel to assure patient and technologist safety in the environment that the studies are being performed. It is important to recognize that the sleep evaluation is being performed in a medical facility. Should an emergency occur while the patient is in the facility, the staff must be able to respond promptly, appropriately and without significant compromise to other patients. This is particularly true when the patient(s) is (are) asleep and may be unaware of or unable to request help in the event of an emergency. Therefore, the safety standard for a sleep facility requires reasonable and nearly continuous monitoring of every patient’s status while undergoing physiological recording in the facility. The level and continuity of monitoring that is required is dependent upon the severity of the patients being studied and the procedural requirements of the Laboratory/Center. Adequate and appropriate additional staff must be available in a timely manner (<30 minutes) to render urgent or emergent assistance. Personnel who are within the building and who may assist the technologist(s) are preferable to electronic messaging or call systems. In particular this standard requires that during the physiologic recording:

- a) At least one technologist is observing the ongoing physiological status of each patient being recorded.
- b) In an emergency, there is procedure for contacting additional or emergency staff, and
- c) There is a mechanism for the additional or emergency staff to access the facility while the technologist(s) is (are) performing their duties, especially during an emergency.

Particular problems occur when a single technologist is alone in the sleep facility with the patient(s). In this situation the following additional conditions must be met

- a) Another individual must be on-call and available to assist the technologist within twenty (20) minutes,
- b) There must be a mechanism for requesting urgent or emergent help that may be readily activated without compromising either the patient or the technologist, and
- c) There must be a provision for providing a reasonable level of continual patient monitoring. The level and continuity of monitoring that is required is dependent upon the severity of the patients being studied and the procedural requirements of the Laboratory/Center. This provision must also address the personal needs of the technologist(s), breaks, meals, patient care issues and other duties of the technologist.

Technologist-to-Patient Ratios: Under most circumstances, the recommended ratio of patients-to-technologist is two-to-one. Procedures that involving intermittent monitoring of patients, either within the facility or from a distant location, shall contribute the equivalent of one-half patient to this ratio. Patients who require greater interventions due to physical impairments, cognitive development, neuropsychological impairment or other disease processes may limit this ratio and must be taken into account prior to the study. In all circumstances, the laboratory must adhere to state and federal regulations pertaining to staffing that are pertinent to the facility.