

OR Conflicts & Attitudes  
Limits for Urinary Catheterization

By

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Several instructors want to know what to do when their clinical site refuses to let the surgical technology student insert urinary catheters. Several scenarios have been encountered.

1. It is against the law for a Surgical Technologist to put in a Foley Catheter.

You should ask them to show you the law. It is not against the law.

Nowhere does it say that to insert a Foley Catheter you need a license. If that were the case medical students and interns would be breaking the law also. You can show the supervisors what is required in the curriculum and just like any other procedure make sure that someone else who is trained in inserting Foleys is there to assist the student. If it is against hospital policy, then the students will need to get the training at another hospital while you educate the hospital trustees and Board of Directors.

The best way to get a policy changed is to educate the people who make the policies. Show them the Curriculum that is mandated by the Accreditation Review Committee for the Surgical Technologist (ARC-ST) curriculum. Show them your program's curriculum. Document that you train your students to insert Foley Catheters.

2. Surgical Technologists are not trained to put in Foley Catheters.

This is when you show them your curriculum. You show them the resources you use to teach the skill and how you document that the student has mastered the skill in the lab.

3. Surgical Technologists don't need to know how to insert Foley Catheters. The nurses and doctors will do it.

You show them the curriculum. Both what is required by the ARC-ST and what you teach. You can site procedures such as vaginal hysterectomies, stress incontinence procedures, cystoscopy and prostate surgery, just to name a few. During these procedures, the Surgical Technologist is often asked to insert the Foley Catheter at sometime during the procedure.

Some schools attach a copy of the competencies that the student are expected to get at that hospital to the clinical contract. This allows the clinical site to see exactly what they should allow the student to do at their site. Again if the hospital is a bit skeptical, make sure your students are experienced at putting in Foley Catheters in the lab setting.

As your program gets established and you prove to the clinical site that your students are well trained in this area, it will be easier for them to trust your students also. You will need to develop a good working relationship with the clinical sites. This will probably not happen over night.