



## **Professional Qualifications Committee Guidance on Suctioning Activities**

This document provides guidance from the Respiratory Care Board's (RCB) Professional Qualifications Committee (PQC) on suctioning activities under California Code of Regulations (CCR), title 16, section 1399.365.

### **Nasal Suctioning**

Nasal suctioning is not a respiratory task when it remains within the nasal cavity and does not enter the pharynx.

- Suctioning may be performed within the nasal cavity.
- The suction device should not advance into the pharynx, including the nasopharynx.

Nasal suctioning becomes a respiratory task when it enters the pharynx or airway. Once suctioning enters the nasopharynx or beyond, it is subject to the limitations of CCR §1399.365, including requirements related to respiratory assessment and authorized providers.

### **Oral Suctioning**

Oral suctioning is not a respiratory task when it remains within the oral cavity and does not enter the pharynx.

- Suctioning may be performed within the oral cavity.
- The suction device should not advance into the pharynx, including the oropharynx.

Oral suctioning becomes a respiratory task when it enters the pharynx or airway. Once suctioning enters the oropharynx or beyond, it is subject to the limitations of CCR §1399.365, including requirements related to respiratory assessment and authorized providers.

### **Tracheostomy Tube Suctioning**

Suctioning inside a tracheostomy tube is not a respiratory task when the suctioning device remains within the tracheostomy tube only.

- Suctioning may be performed within the tracheostomy tube.
- The suction device should not pass beyond the distal end of the tube.

Tracheostomy suctioning becomes a respiratory task when it extends beyond the tracheostomy tube. Once suctioning goes beyond the tracheostomy tube, it is subject to the limitations of CCR §1399.365, including requirements related to respiratory assessment and authorized providers.

This guidance is based on discussion from the PQC's January 23, 2026, public meeting and is intended for suctioning activities in settings subject to CCR section 1399.365. Requirements may differ under other statutes or professional scopes of practice. As noted during the meeting, the RCB may consider future regulatory amendments to better align the regulatory text with this guidance through a separate public rulemaking process.

For general questions about this guidance or CCR section 1399.365, stakeholders may contact the Respiratory Care Board at [rcbinfo@dca.ca.gov](mailto:rcbinfo@dca.ca.gov) or visit [www.rcb.ca.gov](http://www.rcb.ca.gov) for additional information.