



## Clinical Practice Frequently Asked Question

**Q: What are the staffing recommendations for Phase I level of care? Is it necessary to have two nurses present?**

**A:** The American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses' *2025-2026 Perianesthesia Nursing Standards, Practices Recommendations and Interpretive Statements* has practice recommendations for the staffing of perianesthesia registered nurses. The Practice Recommendation: Patient Classification/Staffing Recommendations notes that an appropriate number of perianesthesia registered nursing staff with demonstrated competence must be available to care for both patients and families safely.

There are several factors to consider when assigning registered nurses to patients in the perianesthesia setting. Some of these factors identified in the practice recommendation include the:

- volume of patients in the unit at the time
- patient acuity and complexity of patient care needs
- patient flow processes
- availability of support resources
- physical layout of the unit

ASPAN recommended postanesthesia management criteria related to your question include:

- Two registered nurses, one of whom is competent in Phase I postanesthesia nursing, must be in the same room whenever there is a postoperative patient receiving Phase I level of care.
- Constant vigilance is required during this phase.
- The recommendation listed above should be maintained during “on call” situations.<sup>1,2</sup>

ASPAN encourages organizations to set policies and define practices which identify quality staffing patterns for the care of surgical patients. Patient safety, and nurse personnel safety, are priority for PACU nurses in caring for postoperative patients.<sup>3</sup>



## References

1. American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses. Patient classification/staffing recommendations. In: *2025-2026 Perianesthesia Nursing Standards, Practice Recommendations and Interpretive Statements*. ASPAN; 2024:56-60.
2. Schick L, Windle PE, eds. *PeriAnesthesia Nursing Core Curriculum: Preprocedure, Phase I, and Phase II PACU Nursing*. 4th ed. Elsevier; 2021:861-864.
3. Laidlaw v Lions Gate Hospital, 1969 CanL11 704 BC SC. Accessed February 2026. <http://canlii.ca/t/gc72p>