

TAG: THE EYES AND EARS OF NUCLEAR MEDICINE AT THE STATE LEVEL

Our profession is filled with many abbreviations: TJC, NRC, CMS, HIPAA, and now TAG. Each of these means something very specific. One may be an agency, another a classification, and yet another is a title dedicated to the technologist. TAG stands for Technologist Advocacy Group. As with most acronyms, what does it mean? And what exactly are these technologists doing? Let's take a look.

The Technologist Advocacy Group (TAG Team) consists of dedicated members in each state who are involved at their local level. Their primary responsibility is to identify changes in their state laws/regulations concerning the practice of Nuclear Medicine. They should also be prepared to field questions submitted by the technologists in their state regarding the laws governing the practice of Nuclear Medicine. At the national level, the TAG will be informed of any issue by either the SNMMI Health Policy and Regulatory Affairs (HPRA) staff or the SNMMI Advocacy Committee. This article will provide the TAG with several tools they may employ to stay abreast of any proposed legislative changes to the field of Nuclear Medicine and the means with which they may disseminate this information.

Although these duties are the backbone structure of the TAGs, what should TAG representatives know about their own state? To begin with, they should be knowledgeable of the following Nuclear Medicine practices in their state:

- Is it a licensure state?
- What type of credentialing is required? i.e. CNMT and/or ARRT(N)
- What is the term of the license, and what types of exams are required for licensure.

In addition, they should know which modalities are licensed by their state, as well as the state's continuing education requirement and whether a Scope of Practice is in place for nuclear medicine technologists. They are also responsible for having contact information for the head of the state's Nuclear Medicine Radiation Control Program/Board, the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD), and the NRC Representative. Finally, they need to know who holds a leadership position in their state government's Assembly/House and Senate.

To know the answers to these questions is to have a well-prepared TAG. If the TAG member is knowledgeable, then providing a proper response will be achievable.

But how is it that a state TAG may be made aware of any upcoming challenges to an existing law or a proposed new piece of legislation at their state level? The SNMMI has offered an excellent web service to assist each and every TAG, regardless of which state it represent. This service is called SCOUT.



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SCOUT, <https://scout.sunlightfoundation.com>, is a free service that provides daily insight into how our laws and regulations are shaped in Washington, DC, and our state capitals. SCOUT sends custom alerts based on search criteria created by the TAG representative—providing relevant news on state and/or federal legislation, congressional hearings, court opinions, oversight reports, etc.

When a SCOUT alert is received, the TAG representative should review the proposed legislation to determine how it will impact the nuclear medicine professionals in that state, and then should disseminate this information to them. The TAG representative should then share this same information with the whole TAG Team, the Advocacy Committee, and the SNMMI's HPRA staff. This is done in order to create a proper response, if needed.

The next tool that will help TAG representatives stay informed is our own TAG E-Community, which provides an opportunity to share questions and topical issues with other members of the TAG Team. Information may be shared by using the email address tag.team@snmmi.org

Another way to stay current is to communicate with each other. TAG representatives within the same chapter function as a subgroup within the larger TAG Team; they should stay in regular contact with one another and discuss current events that impact the nuclear medicine profession. Working together, they can then update others at chapter meetings. Contact information for other TAGs can be found at www.snmmi.org/TAGmembers.

Finally, the TAG co-chairs have made an effort to support TAG representatives by having chapter-level conference calls. These calls have proved successful. A second round of calls is about to begin and should be concluded prior to the Annual Meeting in San Diego.

Although TAG duties may seem daunting, they are not. The time commitment is minimal. It involves three or four conference calls a year and, when necessary, addressing issues that arise in the TAG member's state. Any issue that comes to light is not only addressed by the TAG; it is also given attention by both the Advocacy Committee and the SNMMI HPRA staff. Support is offered every step of the way.

The TAG distinction is one that the technologist should be proud to have. TAG is more than just an acronym; it is a title that denotes involvement, knowledge, a passion for our profession, and a willingness to see that our field stays relevant and ever expanding.

For more information, please feel free to contact Tony Sicignano, TAG co-chair, at a0712@sbcglobal.net and/or Kendall Horvath, SNMMI's staff liaison for the TAG Group, at khovath@snmmi.org. ■