

# Introduction

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) is the 35,000-member national professional association that represents pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who practice in inpatient, outpatient, home-care, and long-term-care settings, as well as pharmacy students. ASHP has extensive publishing and educational programs designed to help members improve their delivery of pharmaceutical care, and it is a national accrediting organization for pharmacy residency and pharmacy technician training programs.

## The Compendium

ASHP, since its founding, has developed official professional policies in the form of policy positions and guidance documents about pharmacy practice, first for hospitals, and then for the continuum of practice settings in integrated health systems. Since 1984, these policies have been compiled annually in *Best Practices for Hospital & Health-System Pharmacy*, a compendium of ASHP policy positions, statements, guidelines, technical assistance bulletins, therapeutic position statements, therapeutic guidelines, and selected ASHP-endorsed documents. *Best Practices* reflects the intent of ASHP's professional policies to foster improvements in pharmacy practice and patient care.

The compendium is organized by topic to help readers quickly locate related documents. The table of contents is structured by topic, and under each topic the relevant ASHP policy positions, statements, guidelines, technical assistance bulletins, and endorsed documents are listed. The therapeutic documents are listed by type. Following the table of contents is a page locator for documents by type and title, and the index lists each document, to assist readers who are accustomed to searching for a specific document by its title.

## Origins and Purposes of ASHP's Policy Positions and Guidance Documents

Policy positions generally originate with an ASHP council and are approved by the ASHP Board of Directors and ASHP House of Delegates. Some policy positions originate as House of Delegate resolutions. Statements, guidelines, and technical assistance bulletins originate with an ASHP council or commission. Statements are approved by the Board of Directors and the House of Delegates, because of their broad philosophical nature. Other types of documents are approved by the Board of Directors only. Therapeutic position statements and therapeutic guidelines originate with the ASHP Council on Therapeutics and are approved by the Board of Directors.

There is a gradation in detail among the guidance documents. Policy positions are short pronouncements, intended to address professional practice. Often, principles established in policy positions are elaborated on in statements and guidelines. Statements express basic philosophy, guidelines offer programmatic advice, and technical assistance bulletins offer more detailed programmatic advice. Of the two types of therapeutic documents, therapeutic guidelines are thorough discussions of drug use and thera-

peutic position statements are concise responses to specific therapeutic issues.

The guidance documents of ASHP represent a consensus of professional judgment, expert opinion, and documented evidence. They provide guidance and direction to ASHP members and pharmacy practitioners and to other audiences who affect pharmacy practice. Their use may help to comply with federal and state laws and regulations, to meet accreditation requirements, and to improve pharmacy practice and patient care. They are written to establish reasonable goals, to be progressive and challenging, yet attainable as "best practices" in applicable health-system settings. They generally do not represent minimum levels of practice, unless titled as such, and should not be viewed as ASHP requirements.

The use of ASHP's guidance documents by members and other practitioners is strictly voluntary. Their content should be assessed and adapted based on independent judgment to meet the needs of local health-system settings.

The need for authoritative guidance in pharmacy practice has grown with changes in health care and with the shifting influences from regulatory, accrediting, risk-management, financing, and other bodies. Because of the complex nature of ASHP guidance documents, ASHP does not typically undertake immediate development of new documents or expedited revisions to existing documents in response to environmental changes. Other ASHP activities and services, such as educational sessions at national meetings and *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy (AJHP)* articles, provide more timely information that may be helpful, until sufficient experience is gained to serve as the basis for a document.

## Definitions

The types of guidance documents included in this compendium are defined as follows:

**ASHP Policy Position:** A pronouncement on an issue related to pharmacy professional practice, as approved by the Board of Directors and House of Delegates.

**ASHP Statement:** A declaration and explanation of basic philosophy or principle, as approved by the Board of Directors and the House of Delegates.

**ASHP Guideline:** Advice on the implementation or operation of pharmacy practice programs, as approved by the Board of Directors.

**ASHP Technical Assistance Bulletin:** Specific, detailed advice on pharmacy programs or functions as developed by an ASHP staff division in consultation with experts, as approved by the Board of Directors.\*

**ASHP Therapeutic Guideline:** Thorough, systematically developed advice for health-care professionals on appropriate use of medications for specific clinical circumstances, as approved by the Board of Directors.

**ASHP Therapeutic Position Statement:** Concise statements that respond to specific therapeutic issues of concern to health care consumers and pharmacists, as approved by the Board of Directors.

**ASHP-Endorsed Document:** Professional policy developed by another organization that offers guidance on some aspect of pharmacy practice or medication use, as approved by the Board of Directors.

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*\*The ASHP Board of Directors voted in November 1997 to discontinue the title "Technical Assistance Bulletin" in ASHP guidance documents, assigning the title "Guidelines" in its place. Over time, the title "Guidelines" will replace the title "Technical Assistance Bulletin" on existing documents when they are revised.*

## Development of Guidance Documents

The responsible ASHP council or commission recommends the development of a guidance document after considering whether the topic: a) has generated a need among practitioners for authoritative advice; b) has achieved some stability and there is sufficient experience upon which to base a statement or guideline; c) is relevant to the practice of a significant portion of ASHP's members; d) is within the purview of pharmacy practice in health systems; e) is without other sufficient guidance; and f) does not pose significant legal risks to ASHP. Another consideration is whether ASHP leadership believes that there is room for improvements in practice and that an ASHP document would foster that improvement. The Board of Directors must support the recommendations before developmental processes begin.

The processes used to draft and review new or revised documents vary depending on the body responsible for their development and on the type of document. These processes are described below. Once approved, the document draft becomes an official ASHP policy and is published in *AJHP*, added to ASHP's Web site, and incorporated into the next edition of *Best Practices for Hospital & Health-System Pharmacy*. Therapeutic documents are reviewed and revised as needed every three years, and policy positions and practice documents every five years.

## ASHP Statements and Guidelines

Any of the ASHP policy-recommending bodies (councils and commissions) may initiate and oversee the development of ASHP statements and guidelines; however, most of them are initiated by the Council on Pharmacy Practice. The development of these documents generally includes the following steps:

1. A group of experts on a given topic volunteers to develop a preliminary draft. Drafters are selected based on demonstrated knowledge of the topic and their practice settings. Most often, the drafters are ASHP members.
2. The draft is sent by ASHP to reviewers who have interest and expertise in the given topic. Reviewers consist of members and selected individuals knowledgeable in the content area, representatives of various ASHP

bodies, and other professional organizations. A draft of particular interest to ASHP's membership may be published in *AJHP*, posted on ASHP's Web site, or discussed at an open hearing or in a network forum during an ASHP Summer or Midyear Clinical meeting to solicit comments.

3. Based on the comments, a revised draft is submitted to the appropriate ASHP policy-recommending body for action. When the draft meets the established criteria for content and quality, that body recommends that the Board of Directors approve the document.

## ASHP Therapeutic Guidelines and Therapeutic Position Statements

The Council on Therapeutics (COT) has responsibility for the development of ASHP therapeutic guidelines and ASHP therapeutic position statements.

*Therapeutic Guidelines*—The development of these documents generally includes the following steps:

1. When the COT identifies a topic for therapeutic guidelines development, ASHP formally solicits proposals for a contractual arrangement with an individual, group, or organization to draft the guidelines document and coordinate its review. The contractor will work with a panel of 6–10 experts appointed by ASHP who have diverse backgrounds relevant to the topic.
2. A systematic analysis of the literature is performed, and scientific evidence is evaluated based on predetermined criteria. Recommendations in the document are based on scientific evidence or expert consensus. When expert judgment must be used, the document indicates the scientific reasoning that influenced the decision. Scientific evidence takes precedence over expert judgement. Each recommendation is accompanied by projections of the relevant health and cost outcomes that could result.
3. The expert panel and COT review each draft of the guidelines document and provide comments. This process is repeated until the expert panel and COT are satisfied with the content.
4. ASHP solicits multidisciplinary expert input on the draft. Reviewers consist of members and selected individuals knowledgeable in the content area, representatives of various ASHP bodies, and other professional organizations.
5. Once the above processes are completed, COT recommends that the ASHP Board of Directors approve it.

*ASHP Therapeutic Position Statements (TPS)*—The development of these documents generally includes the following steps:

1. One or more experts on a given topic are assigned to draft the TPS. Drafters are selected based on demonstrated knowledge of the topic and their practice setting. Most often, the drafters are ASHP members.
2. The proposed draft document is reviewed by COT, which may suggest modifications. This process is repeated until COT is satisfied with the content.

3. ASHP solicits multidisciplinary expert input on the draft. Reviewers consist of members and selected individuals knowledgeable in the content area, representatives of various ASHP bodies, and other professional organizations.
4. Once the above processes are completed, COT finalizes the draft and recommends that the ASHP Board of Directors approve it.

### **Access to ASHP Positions and Guidance Documents**

Besides publishing in *AJHP* and *Best Practices for Hospital & Health-System Pharmacy*, policy positions and guidance documents are available through ASHP's Web site at **www.ashp.org**. They are located at the "Policy Positions & Guidelines" heading under "Policy and Practice" on the ASHP Web site ([www.ashp.org/bestpractices](http://www.ashp.org/bestpractices)), where a chronologi-

cal compendium of policy positions (*ASHP Policy Positions 1982–2009*) is also available.

### **Opportunities to Be a Part of Guidance Document Development**

ASHP members determine the needs for policy guidance documents. They write and review the drafts. And, as members of policy-recommending bodies, the Board of Directors, and House of Delegates, they approve the documents.

ASHP members are encouraged to take an active role in the development of documents by suggesting topic ideas for new documents or modifications to current ones, volunteering to be drafters or reviewers, and completing survey and evaluation forms. Members may comment on or express their interests in participating in the development of documents by contacting the editor at (301) 657-3000 or by e-mail at [quality@ashp.org](mailto:quality@ashp.org).