



Background

Historically, the AIA has been opposed to licensure efforts for interior designers.

In 2021, due to conversations with AIA chapters and members, the AIA Board of Directors changed its position from requiring components to oppose interior design licensure to one of neutrality, deferring to the states to determine their own position on the issue. The AIA heard from chapters and members that its rigid position soured their relationships with legislators and prohibited them from negotiating reasonable solutions.

Despite its position change, AIA still firmly believes that:

- Architects are uniquely qualified to lead the design process to design buildings; and,
- ONLY architects and engineers hold the education, training, and experience to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public in the built environment.

This document provides draft definitions to aid in the development of legislative or regulatory language that may allow the licensure of interior designers but limits their practice to areas for which they are trained. The draft definitions also leave all elements related to public health, safety, and welfare in the scope of practice for architects and engineers. Keep in mind that these are drafts only to provide a starting point. They are not intended to be the final language for legislative or regulatory efforts.

Definitions

DRAFT DEFINITION – interior design primary

*“Interior design” means designs, consultations, studies, drawings, specifications, and administration of design construction contracts relating to **nonstructural** interior elements of a building or structure. It includes but is not limited to, reflected ceiling plans, space planning, furnishings, and the fabrication of nonstructural elements within and surrounding interior spaces of buildings.*

PURPOSE

This lays out a basic definition of interior design and what the scope of practice will be for interior designers. Specifying that it includes nonstructural elements implies that it does not include structural elements.

DRAFT DEFINITION – interior design supplemental

“Interior design” specifically excludes the design of or the responsibility for architectural and engineering interior construction work relating to the building systems, except for the specification of fixtures and their location within interior spaces.

PURPOSE

This is a supplemental definition that can be added to any language used to define the scope of practice for interior designers. Including this supplemental definition further clarifies the line of demarcation between interior designers, and architects and engineers.

DRAFT DEFINITION – architectural and engineering scope

“Architectural and engineering interior construction work relating to the building systems” includes, but is not limited to, construction of structural, mechanical, plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, ventilating, electrical, or vertical transportation systems, or construction which materially affects the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants and visitors.



Legislative & Regulatory Language – Interior Design

PURPOSE

Defining this phrase creates additional clarity around the scope of practice for architects and engineers, subsequently placing limitations on the practice of interior design by ensuring they cannot be responsible for any HSW-related elements.

DRAFT DEFINITION – nonstructural element

“Nonstructural element” means an element that does not require structural bracing and which is something other than a load-bearing wall, load-bearing column, or other load-bearing element of a building structure that is essential to the structural integrity of the building.

PURPOSE

Definition of a phrase that provides additional clarity on the scope of practice for interior designers.

DRAFT DEFINITION – for sign and seal

Submission of documents. (1) Subject to s.XXXXX (2), a registered interior designer may sign and seal interior technical submissions, if required by the permitting body, for the issuance of a building permit for an interior alteration or construction project.

PURPOSE

A paragraph to establish the scope of work that an interior designer is allowed to sign and seal. The “s.XXXXX” is a holding place for the relevant state statute, which may already exist or may have to be created.

DRAFT DEFINITION – interior technical submission

“Interior technical submission” means drawings, schedules, and specifications that establishes the scope of an interior design project and contains a statement that the document is not an architectural or engineering study and is not to be used for construction of any loadbearing columns, load-bearing framing or walls of structures, or issuance of any building permit, except as otherwise provided by law.

PURPOSE

This definition adds important details to the scope of work that can be signed and sealed by an interior designer. It explicitly excludes load-bearing and structural elements, to ensure the scope for interior designs doesn’t creep into HSW-related areas.