

## PRACTICE STANDARD

# Nurses: Privacy and Confidentiality

## Introduction

Nurses have ethical and legal responsibilities to protect the privacy and confidentiality of clients' **personal information**. Federal and provincial legislation protect a person's right to privacy and confidentiality of personal information. The specific legislation that applies to a nurse's practice depends on the work setting and the nurse's role. The BCCNM bylaws provide additional direction.

## Standards

1. Nurses collect, use, access, and share clients' personal information:
  - a. Only as needed to fulfill their professional responsibilities, and
  - b. In alignment with:
    - i. Relevant legislation and regulations,
    - ii. The BCCNM bylaws and standards, and
    - iii. Organizational/employer policies and processes.
2. Nurses share relevant personal information with the client's health-care team and inform the **client** how their personal information is shared (or **client's representative**, if applicable).
3. Nurses keep clients' personal information confidential and only share client's personal information outside the health-care team if the client (or client's representative, if applicable) gives consent, or if there is an ethical or legal requirement to do so.
4. Nurses respect the client's (or client's representative, if applicable) choices about who outside the health-care team can access their personal information, and only share it with those individuals if the client (or client's representative, if applicable) gives consent.
5. Nurses use strategies to prevent unauthorized access to client's personal information.
6. When possible in their practice setting, nurses use strategies that prevent others from overhearing the client's health information.
7. Nurses do not discuss clients' personal information in public areas (e.g., cafeteria, elevators) or on social media.
8. Nurses take action if they or others inappropriately access or share a client's personal information, in alignment with:
  - a. BCCNM bylaws, and
  - b. Organizational/employer policies and processes.

## Glossary

**Client:** individual receiving nursing care or services from a nurse.

**Client's Representative:** individual with legal authority to give, refuse, or withdraw consent to healthcare on a client's behalf, including:

- a. "committee of the patient" under the *Patients Property Act*,
- b. parent or guardian of a child under 19 years of age with parental responsibility to give, refuse or withdraw consent to health care for the child under section 41(f) of the *Family Law Act*,
- c. representative authorized by a representation agreement under the *Representation Agreement Act* to make or help in making decisions on behalf of a client,
- d. temporary substitute decision maker chosen under section 16 of the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act*, or
- e. substitute decision maker chosen under section 22 of the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act*.

**Nurses:** licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed graduate nurses, employed student nurses, and employed student psychiatric nurses.

**Personal information:** any identifiable information about the client, including their personal health information, but does not include their business contact information.

## Revision history

Version #	Approved by board	Bylaw in-force	Description
1.0	March 1, 2026	April 1, 2026	Initial publication

Effective April 1, 2026, this practice standard, and any amendments to it, is made a bylaw under the authority of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act, B.C.*

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