

ETHICS STANDARD

Registered Psychiatric Nurses: Code of Ethics

Introduction

The BCCNM *RPN Code of Ethics* articulates the ethical principles and values that guide all members of the Psychiatric Nursing profession. It sets out the framework for professional responsibility and accountability while promoting high ethical standards in practice and providing a benchmark for Registered Psychiatric Nurses to use for self-evaluation.

Through the *Code of Ethics*, Registered Psychiatric Nurses uphold the values of:

- Safe, competent, and ethical practice to ensure the protection of the public;
- Respect for the inherent worth, right of choice, and dignity of persons;
- Health, mental health, and well-being; and,
- Quality practice.

Standards

1. SAFE, COMPETENT, AND ETHICAL PRACTICE TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- a. Knows the difference between personal and professional relationships and assumes responsibility for those relationships.
- b. Commits to building therapeutic relationships and behaves in a manner that protects the integrity of those relationships.
- c. Ensures that the vulnerabilities of others are not exploited for one's own interests.
- d. Practices within one's own level of competence and seeks out additional information or guidance when required.
- e. Strives to ensure evidence-based practice while ensuring **continuing competence** throughout one's professional career.
- f. Strives to maintain a level of personal health, mental health, and well-being in order to provide competent, safe, and ethical care.
- g. Ensures that one neither initiates nor participates in any practice that is considered harmful to the welfare of others.
- h. Protects the confidentiality of all information gathered in the context of the professional relationship.
- i. Practices within relevant legislation that governs privacy, access, use, and disclosure of personal information.

- j. Conducts one's self in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, reliability, impartiality, and diligence.
- k. Recognizes the expertise and limitations of co-workers/ colleagues or students when assigning or delegating responsibilities.
- l. Recognizes one's own limitations and uses professional judgment when accepting responsibilities.
- m. Reports, in good faith, any incompetent or unethical behaviour of health care providers to the appropriate authorities.
- n. Accepts responsibility and accountability for one's own actions taking all necessary steps to prevent or minimize harm.
- o. Refrains from permitting one's professional designation to be used for personal gain in connection with the endorsement of products or services.
- p. Conducts one's self in a manner that promotes a positive image of the profession at the local, community, provincial, and national levels.
- q. Practices according to provincial and federal statutes/acts/regulations/bylaws and the BCCNM standards of practice.
- r. Understands, promotes, and upholds the ethical values of the profession.

2. RESPECT FOR THE INHERENT WORTH, RIGHT OF CHOICE, AND DIGNITY OF PERSONS

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- a. Respects people's autonomy and their right to choose by recognizing them as full partners in decision-making.
- b. Strives to ensure that a person's choices are understood, expressed, and promoted.
- c. Respects the unique, inherent worth and dignity of all persons and strives to ensure that the rights of individuals are upheld.
- d. Recognizes and respects diversity and that a person's culture may influence health practices and decision making.
- e. Upholds the person's legal and moral right to refuse treatment and to choose to live at risk as long as those decisions are in keeping with the law.
- f. Knows, applies, and upholds the elements of informed consent.
- g. Ensures psychiatric nursing decisions are consistent with the person's choices or the choices of a substitute decision maker, where applicable.
- h. Provides opportunities for persons to make choices and decisions even when the capacity for self-determination is reduced.

3. HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- a. Respects the needs and values of each person within the physiological, psychological, developmental, socio-cultural, and spiritual dimensions.
- b. Understands that physical health and mental health are interconnected and are a dynamic process that fluctuates across the lifespan.
- c. Recognizes the complex relationships between emotional, developmental, physical, and mental health and the influence of social factors on physical and mental health and on illness.

- d. Understands that perception, lifestyle, and expectations influence physical and mental health.
- e. Recognizes the role of culture and spirituality in health promotion, illness prevention, and in **recovery**.
- f. Strives to ensure equality in physical and mental health services.

4. QUALITY PRACTICE

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- a. Recognizes that community, socio-economic, and political systems influence all aspects of health.
- b. Ensures that approaches to physical and mental health are collaborative, holistic, and dynamic and include promoting health, preventing illness, and ensuring interventions that promote rehabilitation and recovery.
- c. Uses and contributes to research that promotes the ongoing development of Psychiatric Nursing knowledge, evidence-based practice, and improvements in mental health care.
- d. Contributes to quality practice by promoting positive, healthy, and ethical working environments.
- e. Contributes to promoting and maintaining safe practice environments.
- f. Ensures that safe and competent practice is a priority by advocating for human and material resources.
- g. Advocates for fair and equitable access to services and benefits and for equal treatment and protection of all persons.
- h. Respects and values the knowledge and contributions of other health care providers and works in collaborative partnerships with others.

Glossary

Continuing competence: ongoing ability of an RPN to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, judgment, and interpersonal attributes required to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.

Health: state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization).

Mental Health: a state of well-being in which individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make a contribution to their community (World Health Organization).

Recovery: process in which people living with mental health problems and illnesses are empowered and supported to be actively engaged in their own journey of well-being.

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 ethics standard, and any amendments to it, is made a bylaw under the authority of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act, B.C.*

Pub no.: 1013