

ETHICS STANDARD

Registered Psychiatric Nurses: Professional Standards

Introduction

The *Registered Psychiatric Nurses: Professional Standards* describe, in broad terms, the expected level of performance of all registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs). Professional Standards, along with the *Registered Psychiatric Nurses: Code of Ethics*, address the overarching professional requirements for all registered psychiatric nurses practicing in B.C. Under each standard there are a number of indicators that help determine how to meet the professional standard. The indicators are representative but not comprehensive for each standard.

Standards

STANDARD 1. THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS

The registered psychiatric nurse establishes collaborative professional, interpersonal, and **therapeutic relationships** with clients.

A registered psychiatric nurse:

1. Continually applies the **therapeutic use of self** within professional practice.
2. Recognizes and addresses power imbalances in therapeutic relationships.
3. Ensures client needs remain the focus of the therapeutic relationship.
4. Does not exploit the vulnerability of persons encountered through their practice.
5. Will not engage in any sexual behaviour while in a therapeutic relationship with a client, with or without consent.
6. Will not enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a client or a former client who has received psychotherapeutic treatment from the registered psychiatric nurse.
7. Uses **professional judgment**, effective communication and interpersonal skills, and practices with integrity to establish, maintain and terminate the therapeutic relationship.
8. Recognizes and addresses **transference** and **counter-transference** and their impact on the therapeutic relationship.
9. Applies critical thinking and professional judgment in therapeutic relationships.
10. Establishes and negotiates boundaries in therapeutic relationships.
11. Practices according to the principles of informed consent and confidentiality.
12. Will make best efforts to find suitable alternatives to treating their own family or friends.
13. Develops partnerships using a client-centred, integrated and holistic approach.

STANDARD 2. COMPETENT, EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE

The registered psychiatric nurse continually acquires and integrates **evidence-informed** knowledge and builds on psychiatric nursing education and lifelong learning.

A registered psychiatric nurse:

1. Applies evidence-informed knowledge, skill, critical thinking and professional judgment to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate in the practice of psychiatric nursing.
2. Incorporates evidence-informed knowledge to promote safety and **quality** in psychiatric nursing practice.
3. Uses communication skills effectively.
4. Integrates cultural safety and cultural humility into their practice with diverse clients.
5. Recognizes potential risks and hazards, and implements interventions to promote a safe environment.
6. Integrates infection prevention and control principles in providing psychiatric nursing care.
7. Documents the application of the clinical decision-making process in a responsible, accountable and ethical manner.
8. Applies documentation principles to ensure effective written/electronic communication.
9. Remains current in knowledge relevant to their practice.
10. Incorporates knowledge of therapeutic modalities and conceptual models of psychiatric nursing.
11. Coordinates client care and/or health services throughout the **continuum of care**.
12. Establishes, maintains and coordinates a plan of care based on a comprehensive psychiatric nursing assessment.

STANDARD 3. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The registered psychiatric nurse is accountable and responsible for safe, competent and ethical psychiatric nursing practice that meets the standards of the profession and legislated requirements.

A registered psychiatric nurse:

1. Maintains current registration/licensure.
2. Practises in accordance with all relevant legislation and regulation including the Professional Standards for Registered Psychiatric Nurses.
3. Exercises professional judgment when agency policies and procedures are unclear or absent.
4. Assumes responsibility and accountability for **continuing competence**.
5. Seeks out the necessary resources using skill and professional judgment to address personal and professional limitations.
6. Recognizes the **competencies** and limitations of colleagues and/or students when assigning responsibilities.
7. Responds to and/or reports unsafe practice, professional incompetence, professional misconduct, and incapacity or fitness-to-practice issues to the appropriate authority.
8. Complies with any legal duty to warn and report, including abuse or potential harm to the public.
9. Self-reports to the regulatory body conditions that compromise their fitness to practice.
10. Uses technology, electronic communication and social media responsibly and professionally.

STANDARD 4. LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION IN QUALITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING PRACTICE

The registered psychiatric nurse enhances the safety, quality and effectiveness of psychiatric nursing practice through leadership and collaboration.

A registered psychiatric nurse:

1. Engages in practices that promote physical, environmental and psychological safety.
2. Evaluates the effectiveness of interventions in psychiatric nursing practice.
3. Participates in quality improvement activities to initiate change in psychiatric nursing practice and in the health care system.
4. Collaborates with client, team members, families and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive psychiatric nursing care to achieve the client's health goals.
5. Mentors colleagues and stakeholders for the advancement of psychiatric nursing practice and quality health care.
6. Promotes collaborative practice among health care professionals through respectful working relationships and appropriate documentation practices.
7. Acts as a leader, teacher and role model to students, beginner practitioners and colleagues, supporting, instructing and/or mentoring them in their professional development.
8. Takes action to resolve professional practice issues.
9. Collaborates with and advocates for clients.
10. Demonstrates professional leadership through:
 - a. Building trusting relationships
 - b. Creating empowering environments
 - c. Supporting knowledge development and integration within the health care team
 - d. Advancing psychiatric nursing practice and quality health care
 - e. Leading and sustaining change and balancing competing values and priorities

STANDARD 5. PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL PRACTICE

The registered psychiatric nurse understands, upholds and incorporates the profession's Code of Ethics into their professional practice.

A registered psychiatric nurse:

1. Practises with honesty, integrity and respect, demonstrating the ethics, standards, principles, guidelines and values of the profession.
2. Applies the RPN: Code of Ethics in all areas of their practice.
3. Identifies the effect of their own values, beliefs and experiences in relationships with clients, recognizes potential conflicts, and takes action to prevent or resolve them.
4. Applies ethical and legal considerations in maintaining confidentiality in all forms of communication.
5. Supports the human, legal and moral rights of clients, including the right to make informed decisions and the right to live at risk.

Glossary

Client: individual, family, group, population or entire community that requires nursing expertise.

Competencies: integrated knowledge, skills, professional judgment and attitudes required by a registered psychiatric nurse to practice competently, ethically and safely (Verma, Paterson & Medves, 2006).

Continuing Competence: ongoing ability of a registered psychiatric nurse to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, professional judgment, attitudes, values and interpersonal attributes required to practice safely and ethically in their current role and setting (CRPNA, September 2013).

Continuum of Care: comprehensive system of services and programs, ranging from mental health promotion and illness prevention to specialized services, and designed to match the needs of individuals and populations with appropriate care and treatment, and which vary according to levels of service, structure, and intensity of care. (Austin et al. 2019).

Counter-Transference: nurse's reactions to a client that are based on the nurse's unconscious needs, conflicts, problems, and views of the world. See also **Transference** (Austin & Boyd, 2010).

Evidence-Informed: care based on the collection, interpretation and integration of valid, important, and applicable patient-reported, clinician-observed, and research-derived evidence. (Halter, 2014).

Professional Judgment: evaluation of evidence to make a clinical decision. It is the ability to make critical distinctions and achieve a balanced viewpoint, including the reaction of the registered psychiatric nurse to the client. (RPNRC Entry Level Competencies, November 2014).

Therapeutic Relationship: interpersonal process that is purposeful, goal directed and focused on achieving outcomes in the best interest of the client, in which the nurse maximizes their communication skills, understanding of human behaviour, and personal strengths to advance the client's interests and personal growth, and to promote health and well-being.

Therapeutic Use of Self: complex process of self-awareness through one's own growth and development, as well as one's interactions with others, that guides the process of developing, maintaining and terminating the therapeutic relationship.

Transference: client's experience of feelings toward the nurse, that were originally held toward significant others in their life. See also **Counter-Transference** (Halter, 2014).

References

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Halter, M. J. (2014). *Varcarolis' Canadian Foundation of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing: A Clinical Approach*. Toronto, ON: Elsevier.

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What medic nursing, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy share. *Journal of Allied Health*, 35 (2), pp. 109-115.

Revision history

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