

# **College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of British Columbia**

## **GUIDELINES FOR A HIGH QUALITY PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT FOR REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES**



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**Introduction**

The mandate of the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses is to serve and protect the public. The College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses is responsible through self-regulation to assure a safe, accountable and ethical level of psychiatric nursing practice. The College is accountable to the public through government regulation under the Health Professions Act. This accountability includes assuring the qualifications of those wishing to enter the profession, developing and maintaining acceptable standards of psychiatric nursing practice and fostering means to ensure continued competency and safety to practice.

**Background**

In 2002-2003 an estimated billion dollars was spent in direct and indirect costs as a result of workplace stress and illness in healthcare.

**“If the health authorities are to fulfill government’s expectations of putting patients first, they must ensure that the work environment supports health care workers in their efforts to provide the best patient care possible, such supports include protecting workers from undue stress and risks”. Wayne Strelloff. Auditor General Auditor General’s Report. In *Sickness and in Health* p.2. British Columbia 2004**

Preventable patient adverse effects (unintended injuries or complications caused by health care management rather than by patients underlying disease) is estimated at 70,000 incidents nationally a year. **Source: Canadian Adverse Event Study. Canadian Medical Association Journal, May, 2004 (11)**

In 2004 the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of B.C. undertook an initiative to identify patient/client concerns in mental health settings. The outcome of this initiative was the preparation of the **Report on Client /Patient Safety in Mental Health Settings: Issues, Professional Practice Concerns and Recommendations, A Call for Action 2006.**

**Identified Issues**

Workplace environment, safety issues, health care worker’s health, absenteeism, ‘burnout,’ change and reorganization are all issues that have been identified as common themes at national, provincial and regional levels.

In order to model and foster positive health practices and a high quality practice environment for Registered Psychiatric Nurses, attention needs to be paid to current issues. These issues include but are not limited to:

- Creating healthy workplaces
- Addressing preventable patient adverse effects
- Systemic, management and program changes
- Integration of organizational cultures related to addictions, hospital and community services
- Leadership that supports an ethical workplace, high quality patient-care and practice environments

**Benefits of a High Quality Practice Environment**

The benefits of a high quality practice environment include but are not limited to:

- Improved patient care
- Improved patient safety

- Decreased preventable patient adverse effects
- A healthy workplace environment
- A movement to health promotion
- Major financial savings

### **Guiding Principles for Creation of a High Quality Practice Environment**

Guiding principles to establish a high quality practice environment begins with demonstration of the knowledge and ability to advocate for excellence in health and human services by:

- Influencing policies and standards
- Promoting quality of health and human services
- Addressing health and human resource issues
- Promoting healthy workplaces

In order to promote healthy workplaces, influence policy and promote mental health, create supportive workplaces and establish high quality practice environments the following key principles must be in place:

#### **1. Leadership and Administration**

##### **Establish an administrative and leadership environment that supports quality patient/client safety and promotes high quality practice environments**

Support from senior management is important in the success of influencing policy and promoting a healthy workplace. In addition, creation of an environment that supports open, multi-lateral communication is an important tool in providing decision makers with the information necessary to make effective change.

##### **Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Promotion of awareness and the development of business plans that demonstrate the value of attending to issues of stress and burnout
- Dissemination of research that supports the value of changes that are clinically sound and patient/client centred
- Inclusion of staff in decision making, program development and the development of policies and procedures that support the creation of high quality practice environments

#### **2. Communication**

##### **Implement communication and reporting structures that support comprehensive, timely and appropriate information being disseminated to enhance safety and quality practice systems**

##### **Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Developing linkages, specificity around major areas of change and developing timelines for action and follow up
- Promoting the benefits of supportive workplaces in a non confrontational manner
- Developing team building skills
- Promoting the development of professional practice structures that have binding recommendations

- Working together to develop multi-lateral channels of communication with the various stakeholders through active consultation and participation in decision making

### **3. Clinical Practice**

**Provide a safe clinical practice environment that respects, clinical input, opinions and practice and that is better supported and validated by employers.**

**Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Promoting the involvement of staff in policies and procedures development, ensuring the language that is used is appropriate to the situation and is workable in the real world, and that they are evidence based
- Building in time for mentoring, support and debriefing
- Increasing awareness of available resources
- Being proactive in making management aware of the effects of stress and burnout
- Staying current in professional practice by being involved in formal and non formal educational initiatives

### **4. Physical Environment**

**Promote a safe working environment that protects patients/clients and staff from physical harm.**

**Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Increasing awareness and education related to environmental risks
- Documenting and communicating safety and risk management concerns
- Participating in the development of a communication plan that includes timely feedback from employers
- Having staff consultation and input into safety plans, policies and procedures

### **5. Personal and Professional Self Care**

**Foster knowledge and understanding of deliberate personal and professional self-care.**

**Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Continuous self-evaluation
- Knowing personal capacity and limits
- Having a commitment to move from "being" to "becoming"
- Modeling the vision, values and competencies of psychiatric nursing
- Individual responsibility to personal mental health
- Creation of a healthy workplace
- Maintaining personal wellness

## 6. Collaborative Nursing Practice

**Promote collaborative nursing and inter-professional quality practice environments for the benefit of both patients/clients and staff.**

**Strategies include but are not limited to:**

- Nurses have a duty to provide safe and appropriate nursing care to clients.
- Nurses act in a manner that is consistent with their standards of practice, codes of ethics, scopes of practice and other relevant legislation.
- Nurses practice within their own level of competence and seek direction and guidance from other health care professionals when aspects of the care required are beyond their individual competence.
- Nurses require access to supports and resources in order to provide safe and appropriate care, these include effective nursing leadership, appropriate and sufficient staff, adequate nurse-client ratios, organizational support for collaborative practice and sufficient time to discuss client care needs with colleagues.
- Where two or more categories of nurses work together, safe and appropriate care can best be achieved through collaboration and cooperation amongst nurses, respecting the contribution of each professional.
- When RPNs work with other categories of nurses, the nursing care delivery model must support collaborative practice to ensure safe and appropriate client care.
- As clients' health needs increase, the breadth and depth of the competencies required to provide nursing care also increase.
- When client acuity and/or complexity and/or variability increase, RPNs need additional support as appropriate from nursing colleagues and other disciplines.
- Effective communication among nurses and within organizations is essential in order to achieve quality client outcomes.
- Responsibilities and accountabilities related to assignment of nursing care are made clear at every level within organizations and are understood by nurses.

The above strategies are adapted from ***Collaborative Nursing Practice Guiding Principles for Working Together, March 2006*** prepared by the regulatory bodies for collaborative nursing practices.

### References:

1. Auditor General's Report. B.C. In *Sickness and in Health*. 2004
2. Canadian Medical Association Journal, May 2004, 170 (11)
3. Report on Client/Patient Safety in Mental Health Settings Issues, Professional Practice Concerns and Recommendations - A Call for Action 2006
4. Collaborative Nursing Practice Guiding Principles for Working Together, March 2006