

THE COLLEGE OF REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

DELEGATING TO UNREGULATED CARE PROVIDERS



**GUIDELINES
DECEMBER 6, 2001**

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INTRODUCTION

Delegating to Unregulated Care Providers Guidelines of the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of British Columbia

The mission 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.

As a health regulating body the College shall have guidelines regarding delegation to unregulated care providers. These guidelines will be provided to registrants of the College and will be shared with the public.

The practice of psychiatric nursing is guided by a set of values and beliefs that are included in the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Psychiatric Nurses and the expected Competencies.

At the core of psychiatric nursing practice is the therapeutic relationship between the client (individual, family, group and/or community) and the individual Registered Psychiatric Nurse. Establishing and maintaining a professional therapeutic relationship is the responsibility of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse. This relationship is based on trust, respect, empathy and power.

ISSUE

Registered Psychiatric Nurses are increasingly pressured to delegate tasks to unregulated care providers. These guidelines are intended to guide RPNs in their practice.

Delegating to Unregulated Care Providers (cont)

The College considers the practice of delegating nursing functions to untrained, unregulated individuals to be hazardous and risky and may not be in the best interest of the patient/ client or public. The provisions recommended by the Health Professions Council and supported by the College will improve public safety.

DEFINITIONS

Unregulated Care Providers (UCP)

Unregulated Care Providers are paid workers who are neither registered nor licensed by a regulatory body and have no legally defined scope of practice. Some examples of UCPs are: resident care aides, home support workers and activity aides.

Delegation

Delegation occurs when a required task that is performed primarily by Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPN5) is given to an Unregulated Care Provider. The delegated task is client-specific and the delegation is determined to be in that client's best interest. The delegating RPN is responsible for the decision to delegate and the process of delegation, including the ongoing supervision to assess the UCP's ability to perform the delegated task. The UCP is accountable to the delegating RPN for the performance of the delegated task.

Assignment

Assignment occurs when the required task falls within the UCP's role description and training, as defined by the employer. The employer is responsible for the decisions regarding tasks to be included in the role description and for the ongoing supervision to assess the UCP's ability to perform tasks within the role description. The UCP is accountable to his or her supervisor for the performance of the tasks.

DELEGATION

The RPN who decides or is asked to delegate a nursing function to an unregulated care provider is responsible for the following:

The RPN:

- (1) Considers whether delegation of the function is safe and in the patient's best interest
- 2) Is responsible for the decision to delegate and also the process of delegation
- (3) Is responsible to assess whether the unregulated care provider has the necessary skills and abilities to perform the delegated task
- (4) Is responsible for ongoing supervision of the individual to whom the task is delegated
- (5) Accepts responsibility for specific acts and function based on the Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics

Recommendations from the Health Professions Council regarding delegation of a reserved act

“Therefore, the Council recommends that a provision be enacted which sets out the duties of a health professional and his or her regulatory college when delegating a reserved act. The provision should require the following:

The assigning health professional's governing body must provide assent to the proposed reserved act being performed by someone else:

- *The reserved act to be assigned as well as the level of supervision must be clearly defined and circumscribed by the assigning health professional's governing body*

Recommendations from the Health Professions Council regarding delegation of a reserved act (cont.)

- *Where the person to whom the act will be assigned is a member of a self regulating health profession, his or her governing body must approve of the assigning of the reserved act*
- *The instruction to perform the act must be made in writing either by way of a general written protocol or through a case-specific instruction*
- *The assigning health professional must be satisfied that the individual who will be performing the act has the necessary skills and training to perform the act safely*
- *The assigning health professional must ensure that the person who will be performing the act accepts the assignment”*

Practice Standards

Three of our practice standards illustrate the importance of professionalism, interdisciplinary respect and ethical behaviour.

- The Registered Psychiatric Nurse practices within the boundaries established by the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of B.C. Code of Ethics
- The Registered Psychiatric Nurse functions effectively with other members of the health care team
- The Registered Psychiatric Nurse demonstrates responsibility for personal growth and contributes to the professional growth of others

Code of Ethics

Sections of the Code of Ethics of the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses indicate the following.

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- **Will not initiate or participate in any practice that is considered harmful to the welfare of clients**
- Accepts responsibility for specific acts and functions based on the Standards of Practice prepared by the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of B.C.
- Practices within one's own level of competency; additional help or supervision will be sought when aspects of client care required are beyond their level of expertise
- Provides competent care to clients based on the Standards of Practice and is accountable for outcomes of nursing actions
- **Reports to the appropriate authorities and to the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of B.C. any incompetent or unethical behaviour of associates, while guarding against petty or trivial accusations**
- **Takes appropriate action when actions of any health team member are not in conformity with accepted standards of care**
- Demonstrates knowledge of and practices within the boundaries defined by the provincial legislation related to the practice of psychiatric nursing
- Establishes and maintains a professional therapeutic relationship, which is the responsibility of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse, not the client, and every act or behaviour of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse must benefit the client