Practice Standards set out baseline requirements for specific aspects of Registered Psychiatric Nurses’ practice. They interact with other requirements such as the Professional Standards for Psychiatric Nursing, CRPNBC Bylaws, and relevant legislation.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) carry out nursing activities both autonomously and when following an order from another health professional. This document describes the standards that RPNs must meet when acting without an order.

In certain situations, it is appropriate for RPNs to decide independently that a specific activity is required and to carry out that activity without a client-specific order. In those situations, RPNs may either carry out the activity or write the care plan for the health care team. In addition to the nursing activities that have limits and conditions associated with them, other examples of nursing activities an RPN might carry out without an order include: mental status exams, risk assessments, assistance with activities of daily living, forming a therapeutic relationship, teaching and educating, and crisis intervention.

STANDARDS FOR ACTING WITHOUT AN ORDER

RPNs carry out many complex activities without an order. Making a decision to carry out an activity without an order requires a different level of knowledge, skills and judgement than when the same activity is carried out under an order from another health professional.

Before carrying out any activity without an order, RPNs:

1. Accept sole accountability for determining that the client’s condition warrants performance of the activity.

2. Assess client status and make a nursing diagnosis¹ identifying a condition as the cause of the client’s signs and symptoms and determine that the client’s condition can be improved or resolved through nursing activities.

3. Ensure the activity is:
   a. Within the scope of practice for Registered Psychiatric Nurses.
   b. Congruent with any limits or conditions established by CRPNBC.
   c. Within any restrictions imposed by agency policy².
4. Interpret and use current evidence from research and other credible sources to support both the activity and the decision to carry it out.

5. Have the competence to:
   
a. Determine whether the client’s condition warrants performance of the activity, having considered
      
        ▪ The known risks and benefits to the client.
        ▪ The predictability of outcomes of performing the activity.
        ▪ Other relevant factors specific to the situation.
   
b. Carry out the activity safely and ethically.

c. Manage the intended and unintended outcomes of the activity, having considered the safeguards and resources available in the circumstances to safely manage the intended and unintended outcomes of performing the activity.

6. Obtain client consent as appropriate to situation.

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¹ Some activities may not require a nursing diagnosis before the RPN carries them out, e.g. activities done for the purpose of assessment or prevention.

² Agency refers to the employer of an RPN or agencies through which RPNs provide volunteer services. Agencies may have a policy requiring RPNs to have an order for activities even though an order is not required by the Regulation. These “orders” must be client specific.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Other CRPNBC Practice Standards and requirements are available from the Nursing Standards section of the CRPNBC website: https://www.crpnbc.ca/nursing-standards/

For more information on this or any other practice issue, contact CRPNBC’s Practice Consultant by email at crpnbc@crpnbc.ca or call 604.931.5200 or 1.800.565.2505.