

# Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities



The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation*, pursuant to the *Health Professions Act (HPA)* requires that all regulated members provide, on the request of the CARNA Competence Committee, satisfactory evidence of having met, in each membership year, the continuing competence requirements of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA). The purpose of this interpretive document is to provide guidance for regulated members regarding documenting their continuing competence activities and the documents they must submit when requested.

## CARNA's Position

**Documentation of the continuing competence process constitutes an official document of record used by members to detail their decisions, actions and outcomes associated with all steps of the continuing competence process.**

A member's documentation must demonstrate a clear, logical, chronological record of the performance of a reflective practice review for each membership year and should be consistent with the continuing competence information reported annually to CARNA at registration renewal. Each member must complete continuing competence records annually, retain the documents for five years and submit copies to CARNA when requested.

Professional development constitutes an ongoing component of professional practice. In addition to formal education, much of nursing professional development comes from practice – from being successful in what we do and learning to repeat successful behaviors as well as learning from mistakes and changing our behavior as a result of the mistake. Comprehensive and accurate documentation of the nurse's professional development activities provides the opportunity for reflective learning. Reflective practice involves

the process of learning from one's experiences (including practice, formal and informal education), reconsidering and rethinking our previous knowledge and adding this new knowledge to inform one's practice (Jasper, 2006).

## Documentation Requirements

Continuing competence documentation is a record of the member's reflective review process and includes the following:

- an annual record of self-assessment of the nurse's nursing practice using all of the indicators of the CARNA *Nursing Practice Standards (NPS)* (Nurse Practitioners (NPs) must also use the Nurse Practitioner Competencies approved by CARNA to assess their NP practice.)
- a written learning plan developed and implemented annually for each indicator selected by the member as a priority for professional development
- an annual written evaluation of any changes and influences the learning has had on the member's practice

When a member is selected by CARNA to complete a questionnaire or participate in a document audit, the member's documentation must demonstrate a succession of logical reasoning and linkages between self-assessment, learning goals and learning activities.

A member's continuing competence records provide evidence of the member's actions and decisions related to ensuring their continuing ability to engage in safe, competent and ethical practice.



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\*The term "documentation" is used in this publication to mean any written or electronically generated information recorded by the member.

## Documenting Your Self-Assessment

Each year, members are required to determine professional development goals by performing a comprehensive assessment of their nursing practice against each of the indicators included in the NPS. Taken in their entirety, the NPS reflect the values of the profession and clarify what CARNA expects of its members. It is the responsibility of all regulated members to understand the NPS and apply them to their nursing practice, specific to their area of practice and role. The NPS outline the expectation that all nurses are to actively engage in continuing competence activities.

NPs also use the NP Competencies when assessing their NP practice. The NP Competencies reflect the integrated knowledge, skills, judgment and attributes required of a NP to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.

For each practice year, your documentation must provide evidence that you reviewed each of the four NPS and considered how each of the NPS indicators applies to your practice. NPs must also provide evidence of having reviewed and considered how each of the NP Competencies apply to their NP practice. Your documentation should clearly identify the priority indicator(s) you selected to focus on each year for professional development.

- RNs – minimum one indicator
- Certified Graduate Nurses (CGNs) – minimum one indicator
- NPs - minimum two indicators where at least one must be a CARNA Nurse Practitioner Competency

## Documenting Your Learning Plan

Each practice year, you must develop a written learning plan for each indicator selected for professional development during your self-assessment. The documentation of the learning plan developed for each indicator you selected should clearly identify the following:

- the indicator number selected
- your learning objective (what you want to learn)
- your learning activities related to the learning

objective (have the capacity to achieve the learning desired)

- a statement regarding the relevance of this learning for the nurse in their role and practice setting
- a date for each activity as completed
- a description of how your learning influenced your nursing practice in your current role and practice setting

## Documenting with CARNA Worksheets

The CARNA worksheets *Assessing My Practice*, *Collecting Feedback*, *Learning Plan*, *Reflecting on My Practice* and *Tracking Other Learning* are designed to support nurses in documenting their continuing competence activities. These worksheets, when completed annually before applying to renew your practice permit and subsequently updated throughout the year, substantiate the information reported at registration and provide all the information required for a document audit. The worksheet *Collecting Feedback* is for your use only and should not be submitted during a document audit. Worksheets were also developed for NPs to meet the additional requirement to assess their practice in relation to the NP competencies. **Although members are not required to use these specific worksheets, the same information should be captured in whatever format is used.**

## CARNA Documentation Guidelines for Registered Nurses

Whether your documentation is for a client record or constitutes part of the continuing competence process, the documentation is an official document of record that provides detail about the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation that has been done. A number of principles outlined in the CARNA document entitled *Documentation Guidelines for Registered Nurses* can be applied when documenting your continuing competence activities.

These principles include the following:

- factual accuracy
- accountability
- legal implications of documentation
- timeliness
- interactions with clients and/or health professionals

## Factual Accuracy

Quality documentation contains descriptive information which is a result of direct observation and measurement. Record clearly, legibly and accurately. Use correct terminology and avoid abbreviations as they could be misinterpreted. Correct errors as soon as they are detected. If using forms, complete all fields and insert 'Not applicable' or 'N/A' rather than leaving fields blank. If something is not documented, it could be assumed that it was not done.

## Accountability

A key feature of professional practice is the personal accountability of the practitioner. CARNA NPS indicator 1.1 stipulates "the registered nurse is accountable at all times for their own actions." Being accountable includes being responsible for something or someone and being answerable for one's actions and omissions. Practitioners must be able to justify their actions and decision-making. Documentation of one's continuing competence activities is part of that responsibility. A member's continuing competence records provide evidence of the member's actions and decisions related to ensuring their continuing ability to engage in safe, competent and ethical practice.

## Legal Implications of Documentation

Continuing competence documents are official documents of record which can confirm that you have met the requirements of the CARNA Continuing Competence Program. Complete, accurate and thorough documentation supports your statement of compliance with the continuing competence requirements which you must report to CARNA each year.

## Timeliness

Documentation is an accurate account of what occurred and when it occurred. Update your documentation frequently and regularly. Documentation should ideally occur immediately after, or as close to, the completion of the activity

to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the record. Documentation in chronological succession assists in self-reflection and monitoring professional growth. Whether you are completing the self-assessment, the learning plan, a learning activity or evaluation of the learning activity, record its completion as soon as possible. Record information relevant to the current practice year. Do not include information related to previous professional development, career goals, employment history (e.g., curriculum vitae or resume) that does not pertain to your continuing competence activities for the current year.

## Interactions with Clients and/or Other Health Professionals

Continuing competence documentation should not identify names of clients or co-workers. Initials may be used to refer to clients and others. Do not include client records or laboratory results with your continuing competence documents. Do not submit feedback to CARNA that you received from others about your practice. This includes feedback in the form of e-mail messages where the person's name and e-mail address were included. Submitting personal and/or health information to the CARNA Competence Committee constitutes violation of privacy and confidentiality.

## Continuing Competence Document Audit Requirements

When selected to respond to a questionnaire or participate in a document audit related to continuing competence, your documentation must demonstrate a clear link between each of the following:

- your self-assessment
- the priority indicator(s) you selected to focus on
- your written learning objective(s)
- the learning activities you recorded
- your evaluation of the impact of those activities for each of the practice year(s) requested.

Interpretive documents are explanatory documents that promote the understanding of issues arising from the *Health Professions Act*, the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* and CARNA documents including standards, guidelines, and position statements. For specific information refer to the documents identified as resources. All CARNA documents are available on our website at [www.nurses.ab.ca](http://www.nurses.ab.ca).

The documentation you submit will be evaluated on its ability to provide clear answers to the following audit questions:

- Is there evidence of the member's self-assessment using all the indicators of the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards? (NPs also use the CARNA NP Competencies)
- Is there evidence of prioritization of indicator(s) selected for professional development focus?
- Is there evidence of a learning plan developed to address each indicator prioritized?
- Does the learning plan address the indicator prioritized?
- Does each learning plan include documentation of a learning objective and learning activities?
- Do the learning activities have the capacity to achieve the specified learning objective?
- Is there evidence that the member implemented the learning plan?
- Is there evidence of the relevance of the learning to the member's practice?
- Is there evidence that the member evaluated any impact of the learning on their practice?
- Is the information in documents submitted consistent with the information previously reported to CARNA by the member?
- Are reasons for any changes to selected indicator(s) clearly documented along with evidence of follow-up of assessments, interventions and outcomes?

## Summary

As professionals, nurses are responsible for ensuring that their knowledge and skills are current, their judgments sound, and their practice is safe, competent and ethical. Every RN, CGN and NP practicing in Alberta will regularly participate in learning that contributes to their own continuing professional

development. Documentation provides a chronological record of the nurse's self assessment, insights into their practice and a record of their professional growth, pursuits and achievements. Collectively, this process contributes to nursing knowledge and promotes current evidence and best practice for the nursing profession. Be proud of your professional development work – it contributes to informed nursing practice. Documentation of your continuing competence activities demonstrates your professional accountability to yourself, your clients, your employer and your regulatory body.

## References:

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