Stand Up for Standards

A companion resource to the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards
The purpose of this document is to increase awareness and understanding among registered nurses of the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards. The Nursing Practice Standards represent criteria against which the practice of all regulated members will be measured by CARNA, the public, clients, employers, colleagues and themselves. The development and adoption of practice standards are essential characteristics of self-regulation, based on the belief that members of a profession have the special knowledge required to set their standards of practice and to assess their conduct in the best interests of the public.

The four nursing practice standards are:

1. professional responsibility
2. knowledge-based practice
3. ethical practice
4. provision of service to the public

Each of the four practice standards have a corresponding series of indicators that illustrate how the standard can be met.

Each year, all registered nurses must determine their professional development goals by assessing their practice against each of the indicators. The process of reflection, assessment and selection of learning goals, based on the indicators, is part of CARNA’s Continuing Competence Program, one of the legislated requirements to remain or become eligible to practise as a registered nurse in Alberta.
Professional Responsibility

The registered nurse is personally responsible and accountable for ensuring that their nursing practice and conduct meet the standards of the profession and legislative requirements.
The registered nurse is accountable at all times for their own actions.

Registered nurses are answerable for their practice and for the decisions they make. Registered nurses must practise in a manner consistent with the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses, other legislative requirements and policies in the practice setting and the nursing profession. Registered nurses are responsible to practise competently and ethically and to safeguard the quality of nursing care a client receives.

Reflection/Discussion

⇒ What legislation is relevant to and impacts your practice setting?
⇒ Do you consistently apply the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards and the CNA Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses to your everyday practice?
⇒ How do you maintain your knowledge, skills and competence to provide safe, competent and ethical nursing care?
⇒ How do you ensure you have the right information to make appropriate decisions?
⇒ How do you demonstrate responsibility and accountability for your nursing practice?
⇒ Do you consistently ask questions, admit errors and document accurately?
⇒ What steps could you take to accept responsibility for an error you made?

Resources

• agency policies relevant to error management
• Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2003)
• Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses (CARNA, 2005)
The registered nurse follows current legislation, standards and policies relevant to the profession or practice setting.

The Health Professions Act (HPA), the Registered Nurses Profession Regulation, other legislation, practice standards and agency policies provide guidance and support for registered nurses. As a registered nurse, you are responsible for understanding and applying the CARNA Nursing Practice Standards, guidelines, policies and position statements to your practice and knowing the legislation relevant to your practice setting.

Nurses are responsible for knowing and adhering to agency policies and procedures that are developed to support nursing practice and guide how care is provided. For example, agencies have established policies and processes to address legislation related to advance directives and to protect privacy and confidentiality.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- Are you familiar with HPA and which restricted activities are authorized for registered nurses?
- What policies and processes have been established in your practice setting to address legislative requirements? For example, are there policies relevant to the Protection of Persons in Care Act; the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP); and the Health Information Act?
- What are some ways you can keep up-to-date with new legislation, standards and policies relevant to your practice setting?
- Do policies relevant in your practice setting align with CARNA position statements?

**Resources**

- Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
- Health Professions Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. H-7
- Scopes of Practice (Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Pharmacists Association, 2003)
- Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2003)
- Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses (CARNA, 2005)
The registered nurse questions policies and procedures inconsistent with therapeutic patient/client outcomes, best practices and safety standards.

Registered nurses must provide nursing care that is consistent with their employer’s policies. When evidence calls for a change to nursing practice, nurses must determine if the agency policy or their practice needs to be revised. Registered nurses have a responsibility to question if a policy or procedure is based on evidence and if an order is appropriate for a client.

If agency policies need to be revised, registered nurses have a shared responsibility to work with their manager and administration to ensure that the policies, procedures and processes are evidence-informed and support nurses in the care they provide.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ Is the care you provide consistent with your employer policies?
→ Does your nursing care reflect evidence-informed practice?
→ If you think a policy or procedure needs to be revised to meet the best interests of safety and client care, what process would you use in your practice setting?
→ How would you address a concern with a medication order or a treatment order?
→ What CARN A and/or other documents support you when you question policies and procedures?

**Resources**

- *Camp Nursing: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARN A, 2008)
- *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
- *Documentation Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARN A, 2006)
- *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARN A, 2008)
- *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (CARN A, 2008)
- *Nursing Practice Standards* (CARN A, 2003)
The registered nurse engages in and supports others in the continuing competence process.

The CARNA Continuing Competence Program focuses on promoting the maintenance and enhancement of registered nurses’ competence throughout their career and supports nursing practice by encouraging professional development.

The program is based on reflective practice—the review of one’s own nursing practice to determine learning needs and then incorporating learning to improve one’s own practice. The reflective practice process involves: assessing your practice using the nursing practice standards (nurse practitioners also use the CARNA Nurse Practitioner Competencies); collecting feedback about your practice; identifying and prioritizing your learning needs; developing and implementing your learning plan; and evaluating the impact of the new learning on your practice.

All registered nurses must meet continuing competence requirements to qualify for an annual practice permit.

Reflection/Discussion

→ Do you keep current with knowledge, skills, policies, procedures and technology that apply to your practice area?
→ Do you document your continuing competence activities?
→ Do you understand the documentation process?
→ How do you support your co-workers in the continuing competence process?

Resources

• Continuing Competence Program information on CARNA website
• Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities (CARNA, 2007)
• Promoting Continuing Competence for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, 2004)
• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2005)
• Nurse Practitioner Competencies (CARNA, 2005)
The registered nurse participates in quality improvement activities. Quality improvement processes support the ongoing evaluation of health care. The quality improvement process may include the use of many different methods to monitor and evaluate health care interventions, activities, processes and procedures, identify areas for improvement and, finally, modify or make changes to improve the effectiveness or outcome of the intervention, activity or process.

All registered nurses may not be formally or directly involved in their workplace quality improvement process. However, every registered nurse has a responsibility to bring forward issues or concerns impacting quality nursing practice and, more importantly, client safety.

Refection/Discussion

→ What tools do you and your organization use to assess the effectiveness of your decision-making in your practice setting?

→ What impact does your participation in quality improvement activities have on your practice and the delivery of care to clients, families and other members of the health team?

→ Is your service delivery model effectively meeting client needs in your practice setting?

Resources

• Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses (CANA, 2008)

• The Role of the Registered Nurse in Health Informatics (CANA, 2009)

• Position Statement on the Use of Restraints in Client Care Settings (CANA, 2009)

• Registered Nurse Roles that Facilitate Continuity of Care (CANA, 2008)
The registered nurse practises competently.

Competence is the ability of the registered nurse to integrate and apply knowledge, skill, judgment and personal attributes required to practise safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.

The individual nurse’s competence and practice is influenced by knowledge, attitude, skill, practice setting, employer requirements and client needs. External factors also impact nursing practice and include the constantly changing health-care environment, the shortage of health-care providers and the introduction of new technologies.

Given the challenges of health care, it is critical that registered nurses continue to develop their knowledge and skill to ensure competent and safe nursing practice.

Reflection/Discussion

→ What knowledge and skills are required for you to practise competently in your work setting?

→ How do your personal values and beliefs affect the nursing care you provide?

→ What resources help you maintain professional competence?

Resources

• Continuing Competence Program information on the CARNA website

• Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)

• Entry-to-Practice Competencies for the Registered Nurses Profession (CARNA, 2006)

• Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities (CARNA, 2007)

• Promoting Continuing Competence for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, 2004)

• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2003)
The registered nurse regularly assesses their practice and takes the necessary steps to improve personal competence.

Registered nurses are knowledge workers. They have the breadth and depth of knowledge for comprehensive assessment of client needs in very complex and often rapidly changing situations.

On a regular basis, registered nurses must look at their practice, identify their learning needs and engage in learning activities to ensure that they maintain and enhance their knowledge and skill to improve their level of competence.

Improving competence is an individual and shared responsibility with the employer. The employer fulfils their responsibility by providing opportunities for learning, such as in-services on new technologies, equipment, medications and best practices.

Registered nurses have a responsibility to engage in activities to improve personal competence.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ How do you determine that you are current with best practices?

→ What steps do you take to improve your personal competence?

→ What learning opportunities and supports are available in your practice setting to enhance your professional competence?

**Resources**

- Continuing Competence Program online tutorial on the CARNAC website
- *Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities* (CARNAC, 2007)
- *Nursing Practice Standards* (CARNAC, 2003)
- educational funding information on the CARNAC website
The registered nurse ensures their fitness to practise.

Registered nurses must balance a duty to care for their clients with an equal duty to ensure that their fitness to practise competently does not negatively impact client safety and/or the safety of colleagues.

Fitness to practise means that the registered nurse restricts or accommodates practice if they cannot safely perform essential functions of the nursing role because of mental or physical disabilities.

It is acceptable for professionals to identify that they themselves need help. The same coping skills we teach clients are relevant in our own lives.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- How does your personal fitness to practise impact your nursing care?
- What steps would you take if you could not maintain your physical, mental, emotional or psychological health?
- What supports/resources can you use to cope with life and work stressors?
- Do you take the time to nurture yourself and find a balance in your personal life and work life?

**Resources**

- *Drugs or Alcohol: Are You Affected?* (CARNA, 2005)
- Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Nurses bibliography available through the CARNA library
- *Nursing Practice Standards* (CARNA, 2003)
- *Working Extra Hours: Guidelines for Registered Nurses on Fitness to Practise and the Provision of Safe, Competent, Ethical Nursing Care* (CARNA, 2006)
Knowledge-Based Practice

The registered nurse continually strives to acquire knowledge and skills to provide competent, evidence-based nursing practice.
The registered nurse supports decisions with evidence-based rationale.

Registered nurses must incorporate new knowledge into practice as new research findings and evidence becomes available.

It is not appropriate to simply say “we have always done it that way.” Registered nurses must understand the reasoning behind each intervention and the implications for the client to ensure the best possible outcome.

Reflection/Discussion

→ Is your practice based on research evidence, clinical experience, clinical practice guidelines or knowledge from clients about what is best for them from their perspective?

→ Does your employer use quality assurance processes, professional networks or feedback to support evidence-informed practice?

→ Are your agency policies and procedures based on evidence? Do you consistently follow these policies and procedures?

→ Can you support your clinical decisions with evidence that is current and sound?

Resources

• agency policies and procedures
• *Alternative and/or Complementary Therapy: Standards for Registered Nurses* (CARRNA, 2006)
• *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARRNA, 2008)
• *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (CARRNA, 2008)
• *Medication Administration: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARRNA, 2007)
• NurseOne (Canadian Nurses Association)
• *Position Statement on the Use of Restraints in Client Care Settings* (CARRNA, 2009)
The registered nurse uses appropriate information and resources that enhance patient care and achievement of desired patient outcomes.

Advancements in technology have made it easier to learn about new research and health information. Registered nurses must continually strive to “keep current” and demonstrate best practices for high quality client care.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- How do you keep current and acquire evidence-informed knowledge to support your nursing practice?
- Do you attend in-services, read nursing journals or attend conferences relevant to your area of practice?
- Do you ask colleagues for information and/or feedback about your practice?
- Are you a preceptor for students?
- Do you participate in case conferences as part of a multidisciplinary team or present clinical findings to a team or at a nursing conference?
- Do you participate in a specialty practice group or have you considered Canadian Nurses Association certification in a specific practice area?
- Do you take continuing education courses or attend CARNA education sessions?
- Do you network with experts? Have you considered applying to become a member of a CARNA committee?

**Resources**

- Continuing Competence Program information on the CARNA website
- *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARNA, 2008)
- *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (CARNA, 2008)
- *Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities* (CARNA, 2007)
- *Who Should Supervise Nursing Students?* (CARNA, 2006)
- *Nursing Practice Standards* (CARNA, 2003)
The registered nurse demonstrates critical thinking in collecting and interpreting data, planning, implementing and evaluating all aspects of nursing care.

The skill and willingness to question is called “an attitude of inquiry” (Case, 1994) and is a component of critical thinking. Critical thinking involves using your professional judgment to problem solve and make sound clinical decisions at each step of the nursing process.

Sound clinical decisions are based on a process of questioning and reflection, including: assessment; knowing when and how to seek further information; deciding on the appropriate plan of care; and ongoing evaluation of the situation and effectiveness of actions taken.

Thinking critically, forming ideas, organizing and synthesis of assessment information, recognizing patterns, compiling evidence to support the conclusions and reasoning are essential components of professional accountability, decision-making and quality nursing care.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- Discuss how client assessment findings can impact a plan of action and the care that is provided.
- Discuss how you developed a specific plan of action and evaluated the outcome. What went well? What would you change?

**Resources**

- *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARNA, 2008)
- *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (CARNA, 2008)
- *Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses* (CARNA, 2004)
The registered nurse exercises reasonable judgment and sets justifiable priorities in practice.

When you provide and monitor care for many clients at the same time, decisions must be made about what interventions take priority, what aspects of individual clients’ care must be attended to first and which situations need immediate attention.

Care is based on your knowledge, experience and judgment to determine the nursing interventions required and the order in which they should be performed to ensure safe care and positive client outcomes.

Reflection/Discussion

→ What information do you consider when planning client care? Do you consider best practice guidelines or other evidence to develop a plan of care to address your client’s needs and concerns?

→ When setting priorities and planning care, do you think about a range of options based on your assessment of the client’s health-care needs? Do you consider client acuity, critical events, client needs, family needs, staffing needs and other resources necessary to provide safe effective care?

→ How does a change in your client’s condition, a new admission, staffing issues or an identified learning need of a nursing student or staff member affect the priorities you set for nursing care?

Resources

• Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses (CARNA, 2008)
• Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care (CARNA, 2008)
• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2003)
• Best Practice Guidelines on the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario website
The registered nurse practises within their own level of competence.

Whether you are a novice or an expert registered nurse, aspects of nursing practice are sometimes beyond your level of competence. This may occur when new knowledge, treatments or procedures are introduced into practice; when a nurse transitions from student to new graduate; when a seasoned nurse in one practice setting becomes a novice nurse in a new clinical setting; when roles change, such as from the direct care role to management or from education to research; or from experienced registered nurse to nurse practitioner.

Self-recognition of one’s strengths and limitations in practice and acquiring the new knowledge and skills needed is essential to provide safe, competent, ethical care.

Reflection/Discussion

→ How do you regularly assess your level of knowledge, skill and competence to identify and understand your strengths and limitations in practice?

→ When aspects of practice are beyond your level of competence do you seek help and information?

→ As a manager or experienced nurse, do you create supportive environments where learning and sharing of knowledge is the norm?

Resources

• Continuing Competence Program information on CARNA website
• Liability Protection for Nurses by Nurses (Canadian Nurses Protective Society, 2006)
• Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
• Patient Safety (Canadian Nurses Association, 2003)
The registered nurse documents timely, accurate reports of data collection, interpretation, planning, implementing and evaluating nursing practice.

Documentation communicates health information about the client; provides information for continuity of care; demonstrates the registered nurse’s accountability for the care provided; provides data for quality assurance; and facilitates the ability for approved research studies to be conducted on the data that is collected.

Accurate documentation can be used to resolve questions or concerns about the provision of care; demonstrate that nursing care was reasonable, prudent and met the standards; articulates what care was given and why it was given; and can support a registered nurse in a legal situation where the nursing care provided may be questioned. Documenting as close to the assessment/event as possible is best practice.

Reflection/Discussion

→ What barriers interfere with timely documentation? How do you manage them?
→ Is your documentation non-judgmental, accurate and objective?
→ Are flow sheets, nurses’ notes and plans of care completed as part of the required documentation?
→ Do you document the outcomes of care?
→ Would your documentation stand up to legal scrutiny?

Resources

• agency documentation policies
• Liability Protection for Nurses by Nurses (Canadian Nurses Protective Society, 2006)
• Quality Documentation: Your Best Defence (Canadian Nurses Protective Society, 2007)
• Documentation Guidelines for Registered Nurses (CARNA, 2006)
• Documenting Your Continuing Competence Activities (CARNA, 2007)
• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2003)
• Privacy of Personal Health Information (Canadian Nurses Association, 2001)
The registered nurse supports, facilitates or participates in research relevant to nursing.

The nursing profession relies on the integration of research findings into practice, as nursing research is the critical link to support and implement best practices. Registered nurses are accountable for providing safe, competent and ethical care and to ensure that this care and the nursing interventions that are provided are based on evidence of what is most effective for our client populations. Research findings must be available and accessible for registered nurses to use in their practice.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ Do you actively participate in research activities relevant to nursing practice?

→ Tips to keep active and research fit:
  - Form a nursing journal group.
  - Attend a joint conference with other health professions.
  - Attend a best practice workshop.
  - Think critically and ask questions about practice. Partner with experts in research to explore answers to those questions.
  - Submit your research study for publication.
  - Use technology to access best practice information.
  - Explore how to use evidence in your practice.
  - Mentor students.
  - Role model the use of relevant evidence and research findings.
  - Share knowledge with other disciplines and have them share knowledge with you.

**Resources**

- nursing practice group information sheet
- *Nursing Practice Standards* (CARNA, 2003)
The registered nurse applies nursing knowledge and skill in providing safe, competent, ethical care. Regulated members perform restricted activities authorized under the HPA that they are competent to perform if they are appropriate to the area of practice.

Restricted activities are regulated health services that are identified as involving a significant degree of risk to the public. They are activities that demand specific competencies on the part of the person performing them. Under the Health Professions Act, professions do not own or have exclusive rights to perform restricted activities. Members of several different professions may be authorized to perform the same restricted activity.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- Do you know the restricted activities CARNA has authorized registered nurses, certified graduate nurses, graduate nurses and nurse practitioners to perform?
- Do you know what restricted activities are relevant to your practice setting?
- Can you identify the restricted activities that you and other health professionals you work with are also authorized to perform?
- How does your multidisciplinary team problem solve when several professions are authorized to perform the same restricted activity?

**Resources**

- *Health Professions Act: Standards for Registered Nurses in the Performance of Restricted Activities* (CARNA, 2005)
- *Who Should Supervise Nursing Students?* (CARNA, 2006)
- *Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses* (CARNA, 2005)
- *Standards for Supervision of Nursing Students and Undergraduate Nursing Employees Providing Client Care* (CARNA, 2005)
Ethical Practice

The registered nurse complies with the code of ethics adopted by the council in accordance with the bylaws and section 133 of HPA.
The registered nurse practises with honesty, integrity and respect and complies with the code of ethics adopted by the council in accordance with the bylaws and section 133 of HPA.

The *CNA Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* was endorsed by CARNA Provincial Council in June 2008. CARNA believes the code of ethics serves to protect the public and serves the public interest.

The code of ethics is structured around seven core values that are central to ethical nursing practice. These core values are: providing safe, compassionate, competent and ethical care; promoting health and well-being; promoting and respecting informed decision-making; preserving dignity; maintaining privacy and confidentiality; promoting justice; and being accountable.

**Reflection/Discussion**

> Do you practise in a manner that is consistent with the values outlined in the CNA code of ethics?

> Do you recognize your responsibility to practise with truthfulness and to protect your honour and integrity in all of your professional interactions?

> Do you take responsibility for an error in your judgment and how you resolve the situation?

> Does your practice setting have an overall atmosphere of mutual respect and regard?

> Do you extend an atmosphere of respect to your nursing colleagues?

> Do you promote the dignity of clients receiving care?

**Resources**

- *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
The registered nurse reports unskilled practice or professional misconduct to the appropriate person, agency or professional body.

This can be one of the most difficult standards to uphold as it may cause distress and anxiety for the person who is questioning the practice of a colleague.

Registered nurses have a professional responsibility to protect clients from harm. If you are worried about the care provided by a colleague, talk to them about your concern. Encourage them to speak with their supervisor.

Unsafe practice situations differ from unskilled practice. They are defined as particular circumstances where the obligation of the registered nurse to provide safe, competent, ethical care cannot be fulfilled. The unsafe practice situation could be a result of inadequate staffing, outdated policies or procedures, inappropriate or inadequate supplies and equipment or inappropriate staff mix decisions.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ What should you do if you are concerned about a registered nurse or other health-care professional’s practice?

→ What policies, resources and communications processes are available to address your concerns?

**Resources**

- professional conduct process information on the CARNA website
- *Drugs or Alcohol: Are You Affected?* (CARNA, 2005)
- *Nursing Practice Standards* – Appendix 1: Addressing Unsafe Practice Situations (CARNA, 2003)
- *Professional Boundaries for Registered Nurses: Guidelines for the Nurse-Client Relationship* (CARNA, 2005)
- *Working Extra Hours: Guidelines for Registered Nurses on Fitness to Practice and the Provision of Safe, Competent, Ethical Nursing Care* (CARNA, 2006)
The registered nurse advocates to protect and promote a client’s right to autonomy, respect, privacy, dignity and access to information.

Safeguarding and promoting your clients’ rights is a professional responsibility. Ensuring clients’ values and wishes are understood and respected may involve ethical and/or legislative considerations.

Reflection/Discussion

→ How do you promote and protect your clients’ rights? Do you:
  - provide information and support to enable your clients to act on their own behalf in meeting their health-care needs?
  - respect your clients’ right to make choices about their health and the course of action and/or treatment when they are capable?
  - maintain confidentiality of your clients’ health information?
  - intervene if other health providers fail to respect a client’s right to autonomy, privacy, dignity and access to information?
  - practise according to legislation that governs human rights, privacy and access to health information?

→ What do you do when the nursing care that is required is contrary to your personal values?

Resources

• Confidentiality of Health Information: Your Client’s Rights (Canadian Nurses Protective Society, 1993)
• Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
• Ethical Decision-Making for Registered Nurses in Alberta: Guidelines and Recommendations (Carna, 2005)
• facility/agency policies and procedures
• Health Information Act (2001)*
• Personal Directives Act (2000) c.P-6*
• Protection for Persons in Care Act (2000)*

*NOTE: Legislation is available online at www.qp.gov.ab.ca.
The registered nurse assumes responsibility for ensuring that their relationships with clients are therapeutic and professional.

All health-care professionals must recognize the differences between therapeutic relationships and other types of non-professional relationships.

Defining professional boundaries and providing guidelines for therapeutic nurse-client relationships helps the registered nurse to separate therapeutic behaviour from any behaviour which, well intentioned or not, could lessen the benefit of care to clients, families and communities.

Healthy, professional nurse-client relationships help establish continuity of care.

By following the guidelines of the CARN A position statement on this topic, registered nurses can:

- prevent the occurrence of boundary violations
- maintain a therapeutic nurse-client professional standard of practice.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ What personal and professional attributes help to ensure that you establish and maintain a therapeutic nurse-client professional standard of practice?

→ How would you identify a situation where professional boundaries are violated? How would you address the situation?

**Resources**

- *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
The registered nurse advocates for practice environments that have the organizational and human support systems and the resource allocations necessary for safe, competent and ethical nursing care.

A quality professional practice environment strongly influences the ability of nurses to meet the CARNA *Nursing Practice Standards* and maintain competent and ethical care. In every practice setting, registered nurses should feel confident that they can pose questions, engage in reflective practice and ask for assistance without fear of criticism.

To create a quality professional practice environment, the following organizational supports have been identified: service delivery; health records management; communication; facilities and equipment; nursing leadership; and professional development.

**Reflection/Discussion**

➤ What can you do to ensure that your practice environment is safe for your clients, for you and for your colleagues?

➤ What can you do to contribute to enhancing or improving your practice setting?

➤ How does your attitude or the attitudes of your colleagues impact your practice setting?

**Resources**

- *Nursing Practice Standards* – Appendix 2: Organizational Supports Needed in the Practice Setting (Carna, 2003)

- *Practice Environments: Maximizing Client, Nurse and System Outcomes* (Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, 2007)

- *Primary Health Care* (Carna, 2008)
Provision of Service to the Public

The registered nurse provides nursing service in collaboration with the client, significant others and other health professionals.
The registered nurse collaborates with the client/significant others and other members of the health-care team regarding activities of care planning, implementation and evaluation.

The presence of registered nurses 24/7 in all health-care settings, along with their solid knowledge base, equips them to play a critical role on the team. The voice of nurses is needed in client care. As co-coordinators of care, case managers, client advocates, nursing leaders and direct-care providers, registered nurses need to use strong communication skills to foster collaborative relationships.

It is important for all members of the health-care team to appreciate their own work and that of their colleagues and to learn to exchange ideas with others when things are going well so that positive relationships can be drawn upon in stressful times.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- How can you participate effectively in health team discussions and share information about client assessments to contribute to the direction of the plan of care? What barriers exist and how can you overcome them?
- Do you respect the views, ideas and suggestions of other health team members?
- Do you document the outcomes of care that have been based on team decisions that impact your client’s plan of care?

**Resources**

- *Collaborative Nursing Practice in Alberta* (Carna, College of Licensed Practice Nurses of Alberta, College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta, 2003)
- *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (Carna, 2008)
- *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (Carna, 2008)
- *Position Statement on Vulnerability* (Carna, 2005)
- *Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses* (Carna, 2005)
The registered nurse uses communication and team building skills to enhance client care.

Registered nurses communicate with clients, family members and members of the health-care team using many different tools and forms. Registered nurses collaborate with others and use many strategies such as person-to-person, telephone, video-conferencing and/or other electronic means for assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating client care.

Client safety and positive client-care outcomes are enhanced by the registered nurse’s ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with all members of the health-care team.

**Reflection/Discussion**

- Do you communicate with your clients in a manner that facilitates the development of trust and a therapeutic relationship that supports them to make informed decisions about their care?
- Do you collaborate with other health-care team members to identify actual and potential client health-care needs, strengths, capacities and goals?
- Do you consult with other health-care team members to analyze complex health challenges into manageable components for health-care planning?
- Do you report and complete thorough and accurate documentation of client care and its ongoing evaluation in a clear, concise and timely manner?

**Resources**

- Healthy Workplaces: Healthy Nurses Bibliography information on the CARNA website (see section on Communication/Intrapersonal Relationships)
- *Documentation Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARNA, 2006)
- *Ensuring Safe & Efficient Communication of Medication Prescriptions in Community and Ambulatory Settings* (Alberta College of Pharmacists, CARNA, College of Physicians and Surgeons, 2007)
The registered nurse is accountable for the supervision of other health-care team members, and nursing students when appropriate, and uses the CARNA document *Decision-Making Standards in the Supervision of Health Care Aides: Restricted Activities and Activities of Daily Living* (2003) and CARNA standards for the supervision of care provided by nursing students and undergraduate nursing employees to guide practice.

Registered nurses are responsible for appropriate assignment of care to other health-care providers and must know when and what type of supervision is needed to ensure positive client outcomes.

**Reflection/Discussion**

→ When assigning care and determining the level of supervision needed, do you follow a decision path that can be defined as being clinically sound and reflects the:
  - client’s health-care needs
  - health-care providers’ scope of practice and competence
  - available resources
  - employer policies?

→ Do you clarify your expectations of the health-care provider for independent decision-making and for the use of judgment in deciding when to consult or seek assistance?

**Resources**

- *Entry-to-Practice Competencies for the Registered Nurses Profession* (CARN, 2006)
- *Evidence-Informed Staffing for the Delivery of Nursing Care: Guidelines for Registered Nurses* (CARN, 2008)
- *Guidelines for Assignment of Client Care* (CARN, 2008)
- *Who Should Supervise Nursing Students?* (CARN, 2006)
- *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry-to-Practice as a Registered Nurse* (CARN, 2005)
- *Standards for Supervision of Nursing Students and Undergraduate Nursing Employees Providing Client Care* (CARN, 2005)
The registered nurse explains nursing care to clients and others.

Registered nurses have a depth and breadth of knowledge that can make a significant difference in how clients and families maintain their health, cope with illness and make informed decisions about their health care. Client education focused on the promotion of health helps clients move towards healthy behaviours to care for themselves.

Opportunities for client education may be planned, structured and formal, or spontaneous, unstructured and informal. Methods used for client education may include written, visual, verbal and/or auditory instructional aides or computer-based programs.

Registered nurses engage clients in identifying their health needs, strengths, capacities and goals. The teaching/learning process should include an assessment of the client’s readiness to learn and readiness for involvement and interaction between the client and their family in the learning process.

Reflection/Discussion

➔ Do you take every opportunity to explain nursing care to your clients?
➔ Do you collaborate with your clients and their families in the development of a plan of care?
➔ Do you evaluate if the teaching objectives were reached by validating the comprehension and learning of the client?
➔ Do you document all patient education with the inclusion of the patient’s response and your followup and actions taken?

Resources

• Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (Canadian Nurses Association, 2008)
• Nursing Practice Standards (CARNA, 2005)