



Interpretive Document

WHO SHOULD SUPERVISE NURSING STUDENTS?

December 2006

The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* proclaimed in November 2005, pursuant to the *Health Professions Act*, introduced a number of changes that impact nursing practice. Questions have been asked about who should be involved in the supervision¹ of nursing students². The purpose of this interpretive document is to provide guidance for registered nurses (RNs) employed in education and practice settings regarding the supervision of nursing students.

CARNA's Position

RNs should supervise nursing students in nursing education programs leading to initial entry to practice as a registered nurse.

RNs are professional role models and mentors for nursing students and this relationship is critical for them to acquire the knowledge, skill, attitude and judgment needed to provide safe, competent and ethical care as beginning RNs. The supervision and mentoring of nursing students by RNs is a key element of an approved nursing education program. In order for nursing students to consolidate theory with the roles, responsibilities and scope of RN practice, a collaborative relationship is required between the RN and the nursing faculty member. Together they use their reasonable judgment to set priorities and determine the level of supervision required for a nursing student based on the interventions to be performed, the practice setting and the level of risk. Experienced RNs recognize the value of mentoring and guiding students and this obligation is reinforced in the *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*.

¹ Supervision – consultation and guidance by a member of a regulated health profession in the practice setting.

² Nursing students are those students enrolled in an entry-level nursing education program leading to initial entry-to-practice as a registered nurse and do not include undergraduate nursing employees.

Restricted Activities

Nursing students are unregulated workers who may perform, under the supervision of a regulated member of a health profession, the restricted activities³ that an RN or certified graduate nurse is authorized to perform under the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation*. The document *Health Professions Act: Standards for the Performance of Restricted Activities* (2005) identifies those restricted activities that CARNA's regulated members may perform and any conditions or supervisory requirements that are mandatory in the performance of the restricted activity.

Supervision should be considered within the context of the overall provision of care for a client and not on the supervision of a specific restricted activity. Decisions about supervision must be made so that safe, competent and ethical nursing is provided and the potential of risk or harm to a client is minimized.

CARNA Standards

The CARNA document, *Standards for Supervision of Nursing Students and Undergraduate Nursing Employees Providing Client Care* (2005), provides direction for making decisions about students' practice based on an assessment of potential risks to clients, staff, nursing students and resources available in the practice setting.

The standard for supervision of care provided by nursing students in a clinical practicum is:

Under the supervision of a regulated member of a health profession authorized to perform that restricted activity, nursing students may perform, as part of their clinical placement, the restricted activities that a registered nurse or certified graduate nurse is authorized to perform as set out in HPA Registered Nurses Profession Regulation Section 15(1) and 15(3).

Key points included in the 12 criteria associated with this standard include:

- The practice setting and the approved nursing education program must have an agreement that addresses lines of communication, supervision of the nursing student and expectations and accountabilities.
- The nursing faculty member and the regulated member at the point of care will decide what a reasonable and prudent patient care assignment is for a particular nursing student in that specific practice setting.

³ Restricted activities are regulated health services which have been identified as involving a significant degree of risk to the public and that demand specific competencies on part of the person performing them.

- The supervision of a nursing student by a regulated member may be direct, indirect, or indirect remote.
- The RN or nursing faculty member supervising the nursing student performing the restricted activity intervention will use their critical judgment to decide the level of supervision required based on the restricted activity intervention to be performed, the practice setting and the level of risk involved should the nursing student perform the restricted activity intervention.
- Nursing students must have appropriate theory and practice prior to performing any clinical skill that is a restricted activity intervention.

Nursing Education Program Approval Requirements

In Alberta, nursing education programs leading to initial entry-to-practice as an RN must meet the Nursing Education Program Approval Board (NEPAB) *Standards for Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse (2005)* to be considered an approved nursing education program.

One of the requirements outlined in the NEPAB nursing education standards is:

- 2.6 *The clinical learning activities and clinical placements provide sufficient opportunities for students to meet the designated program outcomes and entry-to-practice competencies, including:*
- (a) The allocations of a sufficient number of clinical hours in the nursing education program;*
 - (b) Clinical learning activities and placements in a variety of settings (acute, continuing, and community) with clients from across the life span; and*
 - (c) A full-time clinical preceptorship at the end of the nursing education program, that:*
 - i. Is a minimum of 10 weeks in length,*
 - ii. Consolidates theory with nursing practice, and*
 - iii. Allows the student to demonstrate the roles, functions and responsibilities of a new graduate about to enter practice.*

In the final clinical preceptorship, NEPAB requires that the nursing student (preceptee) practices full-time alongside the RN (preceptor). The preceptor assists the student to consolidate theory with the roles, functions and competencies of the graduate about to enter practice.

Authorization for Supervision of Nursing Students by Other Health Professionals

The regulations related to the authority to supervise nursing students are different for RNs, registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and other regulated health professionals.

LPNs should not supervise nursing students in the provision of restricted activities as the *The Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation* are silent in authorizing their regulated members to supervise students of another health profession in the provision of restricted activities.

The *Registered Psychiatric and Mental Deficiency Nurses Profession Regulation* authorizes RPNs to supervise nursing students in the performance of restricted activities if the RPN meets specific conditions. RPNs can supervise nursing students if this is appropriate practice in the clinical setting and the RPN is authorized and competent to perform the restricted activity intervention.

Regulations for other health professions may also authorize their members to supervise a nursing student in the performance of a restricted activity only if the restricted activity is authorized for RNs and for the other regulated health profession.

Summary

The supervision of a nursing student by an RN is essential to model registered nursing practice to enable the student to learn the roles and responsibilities of an RN. This involves a vital collaborative relationship between the nursing student and the RN and the nursing faculty member. RNs involved in decisions about the supervision of nursing students must follow the current legislation, standards and policies relevant to the profession or practice setting.

Resources

Canadian Nurses Association. (2002). *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2005). *Health Professions Act: Standards for Registered Nurses in the Performance of Restricted Activities*. Edmonton, AB. Author.

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2005). *Standards for Supervision of Nursing Students and Undergraduate Nursing Employees Providing Client Care*. Edmonton, AB. Author.

Licensed Practical Nurses Profession Regulation, Alta. Reg. 81/2003.

Nursing Education Program Approval Board. (2005). *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse*. Edmonton, AB. Author.

Registered Nurses Profession Regulation, Alta. Reg. 232/2005.

Registered Psychiatric and Mental Deficiency Nurses Profession Regulation, Alta. Reg. 231/2005.