

Camp Nursing

Guidelines for Registered Nurses

June 2015

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A camp is a recreational place away from a usual residence which provides different opportunities and experience for children or adults. It may be for a day, overnight or longer; in an urban or rural setting and accommodation may be in a facility, in tents or in the wilderness. A camp is a community that encourages achievement, builds self-esteem, promotes healthy living, fitness and activity or it may just be the chance to experience a different environment that is healing in itself. Some have a theme, while others target campers with specific interests, such as music or horseback riding. Others specialize in accommodating children and adults with a particular disability or illness. The camp nurse needs to be prepared for a challenging, demanding and multidimensional role.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the practice of RNs in the role of a camp nurse in a camp setting, either in a paid position or as a volunteer. Regardless of the practice setting, the practice of all RNs is grounded in the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* (2008) and the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) *Practice Standards for Regulated Members* (2013).

The goals of RN practice at a camp are to:

- prevent accidents and illness
- promote health
- treat accidents and illness

The camp nurse should also use the following documents to guide practice:

- *Documentation Standards for Regulated Members* (2013)
- *Medication Guidelines* (2015)
- *Privacy and Management of Health Information: Standards for CARNA's Regulated Members* (2011)

The Role of the Camp Nurse

The camp nurse must hold a current CARNA practice permit as an RN. A camp nurse is not only a clinician, but also an educator and a counselor who should be prepared to safely practise autonomously. Camp nurses assume a leadership role in the camp setting and require management skills, community health preparation in addition to a broad-based general educational background with emphasis on prevention and health promotion.

The camp setting is an environment that can provide unique challenges. Each camp is a small community, and camp nurses should know the nature, characteristics and health needs of the campers in this environment.

A nurse practitioner (NP) can practice as a camp nurse and will likely be functioning as an RN. If they are hired as a NP they must consider if the camp population is the same as the stream they are authorized to practice in.

For discussion if volunteer first aid hours can be counted as practice hours call the CARNA Registration Services department.

Is Camp Nursing Right for Me?

Guideline 1

The RN should determine if a camp environment is one in which they are prepared to practise.

When considering a position at a camp, it is important to review the camp's philosophy and objectives. It is essential that the RN ask questions related not only to the type of campers who will be present but also the resources available and the policies and procedures the particular camp has created to address the health-care needs of the campers.

A camp may have detailed or specific qualifications and experience requirements set out in the camp nurse job description, based on the type of camp and the health needs of the campers. Not all camps are alike so before accepting a camp nurse role, either in a paid position or as a volunteer, the RN should meet with the camp leader to discuss the overall expectations and specifics of the camp. There are key questions the RN should ask to help clarify the role and responsibilities and determine if the camp environment is one in which they are prepared to practice.

- Is there a job description available that provides explicit information about the role and responsibilities of the camp nurse?
- Does the camp nurse provide health services to camp staff as well as the campers?
- How and when does the camp nurse communicate with the camp administrator/director?
- What are the services expected from the camp nurse? (e.g., checking and ordering of supplies and equipment, set up the health centre, first aid, health assessment, medication storage, medication administration and/or observation of self-administration, record keeping and storage)
- Will the camp nurse be the only health-care provider on site and be on call 24/7?
- Who will cover for the camp nurse if they have time off?
- Is the camp nurse expected to supervise other camp staff?
- What are the characteristics and health needs of the camp population?
- Are the expectations for this role a good fit with the RN's knowledge and experience?
- Are there former camp nurses who can be contacted to learn about the camp and the nursing responsibilities there?
- Does the camp nurse have responsibilities related to orientation to the camp or health education of camp staff?

- Can the health policies and procedures manual of the camp be reviewed?
- What are the philosophy and objectives of the camp?

Liability Protection

Camp nurses should

- ask if the camp insurance covers the camp nurse
- ask what is excluded in the camp insurance policy for the camp nurse in the event of any lawsuit
- consult with CNPS regarding what professional liability protection is available for CARNA registrants, both volunteer and paid (1-800-267-3390)

Guideline 2

The RN ensures they have appropriate professional liability protection to practice as a camp nurse.

Preparing for Camp

The camp should have procedures to ensure that all campers and camp staff members have provided

- confirmation of a completed health form submitted prior to camp;
- a signed consent for treatment indicating what types of treatment(s) e.g., medication administration, first aid;
- contact information for parents, family, significant other, or guardian; and
- a current photo of themselves.

Before the campers arrive, the camp nurse should be aware of the health needs of campers and expected nursing services. Reviewing the health policies and procedures manual of the camp will assist the camp nurse in understanding the breadth and scope of practice required when at a particular camp. If possible, the completed health assessment forms should be reviewed before camp commences and any questions discussed with the parents or guardians. CARNA recommends the camp nurse has current knowledge in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Guideline 3

The camp nurse must be aware of the expected health needs of campers, what the anticipated nursing services are and review the camp health policies and procedures manual prior to the commencement of camp.

The camp nurse should have the following information available prior to the beginning of camp

- completed health forms for campers and camp staff;
- the health policies and procedures manual of the camp;
- a copy of the camp staff manual which outlines how the camp operates, camp staff responsibilities, personnel policies, disaster and/or evacuation protocols;
- expectations about how to communicate relevant health information including documentation;
- copies of any camp protocols;
- established standards such as infection prevention and control policies, water safety and first aid protocols;
- the camp schedule so the camp nurse knows how health activities interface with the routine daily camp activities;
- CPR and first aid qualifications of other camp staff;
- methods of communication outside the camp e.g., land line, cell phone, internet
- physician or NP availability while at camp, and whether they have been involved with this camp previously;
- EMS service availability, where the nearest emergency department is and provisions to transport the camper there; and
- procedure for initiating calls to parents or guardians and under what circumstances.

On-Site Camp Activities

Camp nurses may arrive at camp before the campers as there is much preparation required. The camp nurse usually organizes the health centre and ensures all equipment is in working order. The health centre should be set up in a way that will work for the type of campers that will visit the camp nurse there. It should be in a quiet area but be easily accessible both for campers and emergency vehicles.

One of the first responsibilities of the camp nurse is to meet each camper and camp staff member at the beginning of the camp term to determine health needs and potential health risks (Casey, 2011). This is an opportunity to determine their baseline health status, review the health assessment form and the medications they have brought with them. Any discrepancy in information of camper's needs should be discussed with the parents or guardians.

Communication is equally as crucial for a camp nurse as it is for RNs in any other setting. Notify camp staff and counselors as necessary of conditions that may pose increased risk in certain activities e.g.:

- seizure disorder
- food allergies
- dietary needs
- limitations and restrictions of activity due to disability or exacerbation of symptoms
- special medical devices

Guideline 4

The camp nurse meets each camper and camp staff member at the beginning of the camp term to determine routine health needs and potential health risks.

The camp nurse promotes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing of campers and camp staff. By familiarizing themselves with issues relevant to the camp setting and the needs of the campers, the camp nurse will be able to provide safe, competent ethical care to children and adults in a fun-filled, natural, wholesome environment.

The camp nurse is often the only health-care professional on staff and should be competent to address a wide variety of conditions, from simple first aid to potentially serious medical emergencies. The camp nurse typically has responsibilities for camp staff health as well as for the health needs of the campers (Casey, 2011).

Guideline 5

The camp nurse is responsible and accountable for having the knowledge, skills, critical thinking and judgment to address the health-care needs of the campers and manage both predictable and unpredictable outcomes of interventions.

Infection Prevention and Control

The camp setting is usually at a higher risk for the spread of infections due to the prolonged and close contact of campers with each other. It is important to ensure camps are not overcrowded, there is good personal hygiene, clean drinking water and the camp has appropriate sanitation practices in place. Food handling standards must be upheld. A camp should have policies for prevention of illness and coping with disease outbreaks.

The camp nurse is a role model and an educator of infection prevention and control methods such as hand washing, coughing into the garment at the upper arm and not sharing cups, straws etc. Hand washing is the single most important method of preventing the spread of illness. Hand sanitizers are useful supplements to hand washing and should be readily available. Hand sanitizers are not a substitute for regular hand washing.

Guideline 6

The camp nurse follows infection, prevention and control standards, policies and procedures.

There are no provincial requirements for immunization prior to attending a camp; therefore, a camp can make their own standards for vaccination. A camp nurse and camp staff should be able to recognize early signs and symptoms of disease. If it is suspected that a camper has a communicable disease the camp nurse should take the necessary measures to provide assessment, isolation and care with communication to the appropriate people such as a parent, primary care provider etc.

Camp Protocols

Protocols can apply to a range of campers who meet certain conditions or criteria. A protocol is a formal document that guides decisions and includes interventions for specific health-care problems to guide clinical decision making. Protocols are a set or series of treatment interventions that can be implemented by the camp nurse for a specific group of clients with identified health conditions when specific circumstances and criteria exist.

Guideline 7

The camp nurse assesses and determines if a specific camper with an identified health condition meets the criteria outlined in the protocol.

The camp organization is responsible for ensuring there are appropriate protocols and procedures for common health issues found at the camp e.g.:

- actions to be taken for minor injuries
- acute inflammatory conditions
- major trauma
- emotional and mental health needs

Guideline 8

The camp nurse has the necessary knowledge, skill and competence to perform the interventions within a protocol.

Established protocols need to be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure they continue to be evidence-informed and reflect best practice. When a camp protocol is used, it is documented on the camper's record. For more information and guidelines on protocols including the development and implementation of a protocol or a protocol that includes medications and information on medication management please refer to the CARNA *Medication Guidelines* (2015).

Medication Management at Camp

It is not uncommon for camp nurses to administer a variety of prescribed medications that campers bring with them. A camper and camp staff may bring prescription and over the counter medications to camp. Nurses who plan to practise at a camp that serves a 'healthy' population may be surprised at the number of campers who have chronic illnesses such as asthma, allergies, diabetes and emotional, behavioral or seizure disorders. For campers with special needs a wide array of skills and knowledge is required, and camp nurses should be knowledgeable about treatments and medications for that particular group.

Up-to-date information about medications and treatments to be given at the camp setting should be obtained. The camp nurse is responsible for contacting parents or guardians to clarify any medication instructions. It is important for the camp nurse to be familiar with the camp anaphylaxis protocol. The camp should have a policy in place that outlines the level of self-management required of a camper with a chronic illness in order to be able to attend.

Guideline 9

The camp nurse practices safe and effective medication management and uses the seven rights of medication administration.

Directions for medication administration should be clearly identified on the pre-camp health form. Medications such as antibiotics, asthma medications, antihistamines, anticonvulsants, insulin, or acne medication may be some of the regularly administered medications in a camp setting. Safe and competent medication practice requires using the seven rights of medication administration.

Seven Rights of Medication Administration

1. right medication
2. right dose
3. right client
4. right route
5. right time and frequency
6. right documentation
7. right reason

The camp nurse will ensure the following responsibilities are completed:

- Pre-camp health forms are reviewed to determine prescription and over the counter (OTC) medications used by the campers and camp staff.
- Medication, including OTC medications, accompanying a camper should remain in its original container, be labeled with the name of the camper and have clear instructions for administration.
- A system is developed to administer medications safely e.g., campers give their medications to the camp nurse to store safely and come to the camp health centre for the dose at the prescribed time, or the nurse may administer medications at meal-times depending on the camp or camper.
- A monitoring system is in place when medication is self-administered using, for example, inhalant devices and anaphylactic auto-injectors.
- Camp staff are made aware of which campers carry medications, what the indications for use are and how they can assist the camper in taking these medications.
- Documentation of all medications given.

Guideline 10

The camp nurse only recommends or administers OTC medication when there is supporting practice setting policy in place.

For overnight/short trips away from the camp, it is recommended that a partial prescription of medications be sent with campers. If this is desired, parents or guardians may request their pharmacist to re-dispense these medications and provide appropriate labeling.

Storage of Medications

The camp nurse may be responsible for ensuring safe and secure storage of medications. The following best practices should be maintained:

- a. Store medications securely and in the original container.
- b. Store medications in an appropriate place e.g., away from light, at room temperature or in refrigerator etc.
- c. Check expiry dates of stored drugs before and throughout camp.

Stock medication should have an inventory list. This list should be managed by the camp nurse and kept up to date before, throughout and at the end of camp. The list should note where the medication is stored e.g., health centre, first aid kit etc. Stock medication that is no longer useable, e.g., out of date, soiled, evaporated etc., should be disposed of safely.

Guideline 11

The camp nurse ensures safe and secure storage and disposal of medications.

Documentation

Documentation is an integral part of providing nursing care regardless of the practice setting, as outlined in CARNA's *Documentation Standards for Regulated Members* (2013). Camp nurses are expected to record any nursing care, including use of protocols and administration of medication, which is provided for a camper or camp staff member.

Health records may vary according to the type of camp and can be written or electronic. The health record should also include a health history form, list of special needs such as allergies, medications, specific nursing care, limitations to various activities, and contact information for parents, family, guardians, significant others and the primary care provider etc. All information received and documented should be relevant to the health and care provided for the camper or staff member.

Guideline 12

The camp nurse records any nursing care, including use of protocols and administration of medication, which is provided for a camper or camp staff member.

Camp nurses have an obligation to protect and maintain the camper's right to confidentiality of the health information on their record. Any communication about the health of a camper should be in accordance with privacy policies and legislation (e.g., the *Health Information Act*, the *Personal Information Protection Act of Alberta*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*). For more information about privacy of health information please refer to the legislation webpage on the CARNA website or call the help desk for a particular legislation e.g. the HIA Help Desk.

Guideline 13

The camp nurse ensures the confidentiality of health and personal information of the camper and camp staff.

Summary

The role of the camp nurse is highly valued by campers, families, parents, camp staff and administrators. As more children and adults with chronic conditions are able to attend a camp, the camp health centre has become more than a first aid station. Today's camps are often staffed by professional RNs who are prepared for a challenging and multidimensional role. Camp nurses who are prepared well in advance of the camp will be able to provide safe, competent and ethical care to children and adults in a fun-filled, natural environment.

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