

RPNC

*Registered
Psychiatric
Nurses
Of Canada*

*Code of Ethics
&
Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice*

*For
Registered Psychiatric Nurses
In Canada*

(For Consultation)

June 2004

*Third Edition Revised April 2007
Prepared for Validation July 2008*

© 2005 Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Canada,

A unified provincial, national and international voice for Canadian Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

Purpose

The *Code of Ethics* articulates ethical principles, values and standards to guide all members of the psychiatric nursing profession. The *Code* defines accepted behaviour and establishes a framework for professional responsibility and accountability. The *Code* promotes high ethical standards of practice and provides a benchmark for psychiatric nurses to use for self evaluation. The *Code of Ethics* identifies the obligations of the profession and the obligations of individual psychiatric nurses to society.

The *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice* articulates the legal and professional expectations of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse. The standards apply to all practice settings, domains of practice, and roles regardless of educational preparation or professional experience.

This document was developed to provide guidance to Registered Psychiatric Nurses, the public, educators and employers.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses in all domains of practice use this document to guide professional practice. The beginning Registered Psychiatric Nurse uses this document to understand the professional expectations as they enter into the practice of psychiatric nursing.

The *Code of Ethics & Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice* of Registered Psychiatric Nurses is identified for the public within this document. Educators use this document as a guide for development of curriculum and learning outcomes for entry level psychiatric nursing education programs. Employers use this document to clarify the *Code of Ethics & Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice* of their Registered Psychiatric Nurse employees. Further, this document supports employers in orientating and planning for professional development of Registered Psychiatric Nurse employees.

Background

Psychiatric Nursing in Canada

Psychiatric Nursing is regulated in Canada within the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPN s) engage in various roles in their work in providing mental health services to individuals, families, groups and communities. The practice of psychiatric nursing occurs within the domains of direct practice, education, administration and research.

The profession of psychiatric nursing assumes the privilege and responsibility of self-regulation through provincial legislation. The regulatory authorities in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan regulate the profession of psychiatric nursing and are mandated to protect the public. As a self-regulating profession, the provincial regulatory authorities set standards for psychiatric nursing education programs and professional practice.

Guiding Principles

The Profession of Psychiatric Nursing

Psychiatric Nursing, as a distinct profession, provides service to individuals whose primary care needs relate to mental, physical and developmental health. The core knowledge and skills of psychiatric nursing are developed from the biological, physical, psychosocial and nursing sciences. This body of knowledge and the acquired competencies guide in the application of critical thinking and professional judgment. The basis of psychiatric nursing is a caring, therapeutic relationship. Psychiatric nursing focuses on various factors that influence health while committing to the promotion, restoration and maintenance of optimal health.

The Philosophy

Psychiatric nursing as a health profession values mental health as much as physical health. There must be equity of services, in both quality and quantity, for persons who require mental health services. Psychiatric nursing, as a profession, responds and influences emerging mental health needs in a changing and complex global community.

The Values

Registered Psychiatric Nurses uphold the values of: safe, competent and ethical practice to protect the public; respect for the inherent worth, right of choice and dignity of persons; health, mental health and well-being; and, quality practice environments.

The Code of Ethics

Safe, competent and ethical practice to ensure the protection of the public

Registered Psychiatric Nurses:

- 1) Know the difference between professional and personal relationships and are committed to building therapeutic relationships as a foundation of meaningful communication.
- 2) Recognize vulnerability of persons and do not exploit those vulnerabilities for the psychiatric nurse's own interest or in any way that might compromise the therapeutic relationship.
- 3) Practice within own level of competence and seek out additional information or supervision when required.
- 4) Strive to ensure evidence based practice and ensure continuing competence their own area of practice throughout their professional career.
- 5) Maintain a personal level of health, mental health and well being in order to provide a competent, safe and ethical care to the public.
- 6) Do not initiate or participate in any practice that is considered harmful to the welfare of others.
- 7) Protect the confidentiality of all information gathered in the context of the professional relationship, and practice within relevant legislation that govern privacy, access, use and disclosure of personal information.
- 8) Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, reliability, impartiality and diligence.
- 9) Recognize the expertise and limitations of co-workers/ colleagues and use professional judgment when accepting and delegating responsibilities.
- 10) Report, in good faith, any incompetent or unethical behavior of health care providers to the appropriate authorities.
- 11) Accept responsibility for own actions and take all necessary steps to prevent or minimize harm arising from adverse events.
- 12) Refrain from permitting their professional designation to be used in connection with the endorsement of products/services/commercial products.
- 13) Conduct themselves in a manner that promotes the development and awareness of the psychiatric nursing profession at the local, community, provincial and national levels.
- 14) Practice according to the provincial and federal statutes/acts/regulations/by-laws and the *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice*.
- 15) Understand, promote and uphold the ethical values of the profession.

Respect for the inherent worth, right of choice and dignity of persons

Registered Psychiatric Nurses:

- 1) Respect and promote the autonomy and right of choice of persons and recognize them as full partners in decision making.
- 2) Ensure that a person's choices are understood, expressed and advocated for.
- 3) Respect the unique and inherent worth and dignity of all persons and ensure their rights are upheld.
- 4) Respect the diversity among persons and their rights to unique beliefs consistent with the rights of others.
- 5) Respect a person's method of decision making, recognizing that different cultures place different weight on individualism and the role of the family and community in decision making.
- 6) Uphold the competent person's legal and moral right to refuse treatment and to choose to live at risk as long as those decisions are in keeping with legislation.
- 7) Know, apply and uphold the elements of informed consent.
- 8) Ensure psychiatric nursing decisions are consistent with person's choices or the choices of a substitute decision maker, where applicable.
- 9) Provide opportunities for persons to make choices and support their ability to make decisions even when the capacity for self-determination is reduced.

Health, mental health and well-being

Registered Psychiatric Nurses:

- 1) Are sensitive to the rights, needs and values of the person within the physiological, psychological, developmental, socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions of health.

- 2) Understand that health and mental health are interconnected and is a dynamic process that fluctuates across the lifespan.
- 3) Understand that perception, lifestyle and expectations influence health and mental health.
- 4) Ensure that approaches to health and mental health are collaborative, holistic, and dynamic and includes the full spectrum of mental health promotion, prevention, intervention and rehabilitation.
- 5) Improve and support health/mental health access and care by utilizing and contributing to research activities that foster the ongoing development of psychiatric nursing knowledge and evidence based psychiatric nursing practice.
- 6) Respect and value the knowledge and contributions of other health care providers and engage in processes of active collaboration seeking consultations and referrals where indicated.

Quality Practice Environments

Registered Psychiatric Nurses:

- 1) Recognize that the environment influences health and mental health and that community, socio-economic and political systems contribute to defining environment.
- 2) Contribute to quality practice environments by promoting positive, healthy and ethical working environments.
- 3) Contribute to and maintain safe practice environments.
- 4) Advocate and set priorities for human and material resources to provide for safe and competent psychiatric nursing practice.
- 5) Advocate for fair and equitable access to services and benefits and for equal treatment and protection of all persons.

Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice

The *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice* (2005) describe in broad terms, the expected level of performance of all Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

This document outlines the *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice* and their *Indicators*. Although the *Indicators* illustrate how the *Standards* are met, they are not intended to be all inclusive or an exhaustive list of criteria for each standard.

The *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice*:

- 1) Registered Psychiatric Nurses establish professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships with individuals, groups, families and communities.
- 2) Registered Psychiatric Nurses apply and integrate theory-based knowledge relevant to professional practice derived from psychiatric nursing education and continued life-long learning.
- 3) Registered Psychiatric Nurses are accountable to the public for safe, competent and ethical psychiatric nursing practice.
- 4) Registered Psychiatric Nurses understand, promote and uphold the ethical values of the profession.

Standard 1: Therapeutic Interpersonal Relationships

Registered Psychiatric Nurses establish professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships with individuals, groups, families and communities.

Indicators:

A Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- Role models positive professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships.
- Uses professional judgment and practices with personal integrity to initiate, maintain and terminate professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships.
- Consistently applies processes for self-awareness within professional practice.
- Collaborates and advocates with individuals, families, groups and communities.
- Creates therapeutic environments in diverse practice settings.
- Creates authentic partnerships in professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships.
- Recognizes and addresses power imbalances in professional, interpersonal and therapeutic relationships.

Standard 2: Application and Integration of Theory-Based Knowledge

Registered Psychiatric Nurses apply and integrate theory-based knowledge relevant to professional practice derived from psychiatric nursing education and continued life-long learning.

Indicators:

A Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- Uses theory-based knowledge in psychiatric nursing practice.
- Synthesizes and applies recognized theories or frameworks to engage in innovative problem solving.
- Provides theoretical and/or evidence based rationale for psychiatric nursing practice.
- Applies theory to psychiatric nursing decisions and interventions.
- Applies theory-based knowledge, skill and judgment to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the practice of psychiatric nursing.
- Applies critical thinking in the problem solving process.
- Creates, implements and evaluates plans of care.
- Documents psychiatric nursing actions and decisions.
- Identifies and intervenes appropriately with unexpected and/or atypical client responses.
- Remains current in knowledge relevant to the professional practice setting.
- Engages in life long learning.

Standard 3: Professional Responsibility

Registered Psychiatric Nurses are accountable to the public for safe, competent and ethical psychiatric nursing practice.

Indicators:

A Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- Practices in accordance with the *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice*, *Code of Ethics* and relevant legislation.
- Assumes responsibility and accountability for own practice.
- Recognizes personal and professional limitations, consults and refers appropriately.
- Creates and maintains professional boundaries in psychiatric nursing practice.
- Integrates cultural safety into psychiatric nursing practice.
- Recognizes and reports unprofessional and/or unethical conduct.
- Assumes responsibility and accountability for continuing competence.

Standard 4: Professional Ethics

Registered Psychiatric Nurses understand, promote and uphold the ethical values of the profession.

Indicators:

A Registered Psychiatric Nurse:

- Practices in a manner that reflects positively on the profession.
- Adheres to the professional *Code of Ethics*.
- Uses ethical principles to guide psychiatric nursing practice.
- Applies the elements of confidentiality and consent in psychiatric nursing practice.
- Recognizes and mitigates the risks of exploiting power imbalances in psychiatric nursing practice.
- Supports client's rights to make informed decisions.
- Maintains boundaries between professional and personal relationships.
- Acts as an advocate in psychiatric nursing practice.

Glossary

accountability	being answerable for one's own actions
boundaries	the limits or margins that support and maintain therapeutic relationships.
client/person	anyone to whom a Registered Psychiatric Nurse provides service. An individual, family, group or community that participates with Registered Psychiatric Nurses through promotion, prevention or rehabilitation.
collaboration	the process of co-operation or joint effort that embraces respect and shared responsibility. The focus is on problem solving.
community	a body of people united by common needs and interests.
competency	the knowledge, skills, judgments and attitudes and values required for successful functioning of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse.
continuing competence	maintaining competence throughout one's career.
deliberate consciousness	an intentional and continual process which involves critical self examination at the personal and professional level.
evaluation	the planned systematic comparison with the stated outcomes, objectives or standards.
family	a group of people united by ancestry or choice
group	a number of people who share common characteristics
health	a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization).
individual	a singular, distinct and unique person.
mental health	a state which supports affective, cognitive and relational capacity to experience the triple standard of employment, leisure and relationships.
mental illness	an imprecise term that classifies or groups conditions which create imbalances in one's holistic health.