



# Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut

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## **Position Statement** for registered nurses and nurse practitioners working with and delegating to unregulated healthcare providers

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### **RNANT/NU Position:**

This position statement is to provide clarity to registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) working with and delegating aspects of nursing care to unregulated healthcare providers. RNs and NPs may take orders and/or follow directives from a regulated healthcare provider with a defined scope of practice. Examples of regulated healthcare workers in the NT/NU include but are not limited to registered midwives, nurse practitioners and medical physicians.

All references made to registered nurses (RNs) in this document include nurse practitioners (NPs).

### **Legislative/Regulatory Accountability:**

- 1) RNANT/NU Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses, January 2010
  - Principle 4;
- 2) RNANT/NU Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, April 2014
  - Standards 1.5 and 1.7;
- 3) The Canadian Nurses Association(CNA) Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses, 2008
  - G. Being Accountable: Nurses are accountable for their actions and answerable for their practice.

### **Ethical Accountability:**

- 1) RNANT/NU Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, April 2014
  - Standard 1: Responsibilities and Accountability.

### **Responsibilities of Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners delegating to unregulated healthcare providers:**

The current trend in health care in Canada is a move toward a more diverse mix of health care personnel with the goal to provide safe, competent, ethical and fiscally responsible health care for Canadians. This change in staffing mix includes the utilization of unregulated healthcare providers.

There are numerous and varying job descriptions for unregulated healthcare providers depending upon jurisdiction and institutional/employer requirements. This makes it difficult for the RN to have a clear vision of the unregulated healthcare providers' abilities and responsibilities when making decisions regarding delegating an aspect of nursing care. Consequently, the RN, when delegating aspects of nursing care to unregulated healthcare provider(s) is responsible to ensure:

- 1) there is a clear understanding of the role and expectations of the unregulated healthcare provider in the provision of care. This is facilitated through clear, current job description(s) provided by the employer that includes the unregulated healthcare provider's responsibilities and competencies that the RN can utilize in the decision making process.
  - 2) he/she has knowledge of the patient(s) condition(s) to assist in the decision making process prior to delegating a task.
  - 3) he/she is aware of employer policies that outline responsibilities and accountabilities of RNs delegating to unregulated healthcare providers. This includes ensuring that reporting structures for outcomes/results of the assigned and delegated tasks to the unregulated healthcare provider(s) are in place.
  - 4) the unregulated healthcare provider receives clear direction and understands the delegated task they are being asked to perform, what to look for (patient's response or results) and when to report the findings to the RN.
- Registered nurses have a professional obligation to intervene if they become aware of any situation of unsafe or unethical care (e.g., if the unregulated healthcare provider is unable to do an assigned task or performs in an unethical manner). Interventions may include guidance, teaching and direction, clarification of the care plan and, if necessary, reporting to the appropriate authority (CRNBC, 2013).
  - The responsibility for nursing cannot be delegated. The registered nurse must continue to be responsible for the overall assessment, determination and client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation when tasks are delegated to an unregulated healthcare provider. (CRNBC, 2013)
  - Within the context of this position statement – nothing in this statement negates the employer responsibility to ensure patient safety through adequate staffing, staff education, formal, regular competency review of staff and a timely mechanism to address concerns.

### **Responsibilities of Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners working with unregulated healthcare providers:**

It is the responsibility of each registered nurse to be aware legally they can only follow the orders/directives of regulated healthcare professionals. Additionally, the RN must ascertain that giving the orders/directives is within the scope of practice of the regulated healthcare provider.

## Definitions:

**Accountability:** The obligation to acknowledge the professional, ethical and legal aspects of one's role, and to answer for the consequences and outcomes of one's actions. Accountability resides in a role and can never be shared or delegated (CRNNS & CLPNNS, 2012).

**Scope of Practice:** The full scope of nursing practice reflects all of the roles and activities undertaken by registered nurses and nurse practitioners to address the full range of human experiences and responses health and illness. It sets the outer boundaries of practice for all members and encompasses all that nurses are educated and authorized to perform (Lillibridge, Axford, & Rowley, 2000). Please reference the "RNANT/NU Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses, January 2010" document for additional information on the scope of practice of the individual nurse.

**Unregulated Healthcare Providers:** Unregulated healthcare providers are employees who provide care to patients in a variety of settings. They are considered unregulated because there is a lack of standardization in their education and skill sets. They have no legally defined scope of practice and they do not have established standards of practice. There are no accountable, professional bodies responsible to oversee the quality and level of education required for entry to practice, continuing competence and professional conduct (CRNM, 2010). Examples of unregulated healthcare providers include but are not limited to, personal support workers (PSW), home care workers (HCW), physician's assistants (PA), clinic assistants (CA), nursing aides (NA), etc.

**Delegation:** The transfer of a task normally performed by a registered nurse or other regulated provider to an unregulated healthcare provider. The task is normally outside the role description and training of the unregulated healthcare provider. The delegation is patient specific and determined to be in the best interest of the patient. The delegating registered nurse is responsible and accountable for the decision to delegate and the process of delegation including the ongoing supervision to assess the ability of the unregulated healthcare provider to perform the task. The unregulated healthcare provider is responsible to the delegating RN for the performance of the delegated task. (CRNBC, 2013)

## References:

College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (2013). *Assigning and Delegating to Unregulated Care Providers*. Retrieved from

<https://www.crnbc.ca/Standards/Lists/StandardResources/98AssigningDelegatingUCPs.pdf>

College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (2010). *Delegation to Unregulated Care Providers*. Retrieved from [http://cms.tng-secure.com/file\\_download.php?fFile\\_id=13506](http://cms.tng-secure.com/file_download.php?fFile_id=13506)

College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia & College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (2012). *Assignment and Delegation Guidelines for Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses*. Halifax, Canada: Author.

Lillibridge, J., Axford, R., & Rowley, G. (2000). *The contribution of nurses' perceptions and action in defining scope and stabilizing professional boundaries of nursing practice*. *Collegian*, 7 (4), 27-39.

## **Companion Documents:**

RNANT/NU Scope of Practice for Registered Nurses, January 2010.

RNANT/NU Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, April 2014.

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses, 2008.