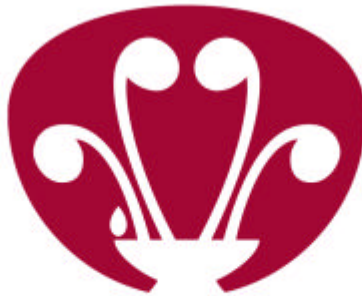


Practice Guideline:
WORKING WITH
UNREGULATED CARE PROVIDERS



Nurses Association
OF NEW BRUNSWICK



MANDATE

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick is a professional organization that exists to support nurses and to protect the public by promoting and maintaining standards for nursing education and practice, and by advocating for healthy public policy

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick endorses the principles of self-regulation, that is, promoting good practice, preventing poor practice and intervening when practice is unacceptable.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction.....	4
Working with Unregulated Care Providers: Overview.....	5
Assigning Tasks to Unregulated Care Providers	6
Delegating Tasks to Unregulated Care Providers.....	7
TABLE 1: Registered Nurse Assignment and Delegation to Unregulated Care Providers	8
Additional Resources.....	9
Glossary	10
Reference.....	11

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Introduction

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick (NANB) is committed to promoting the provision of high quality nursing care to the people of New Brunswick, at a level appropriate to each individual's needs. The *Guidelines for Working with Unregulated Care Providers* document has been developed to support the role of registered nurses when working with unregulated care providers. NANB's guidelines include information intended to provide guidance, instruction and direction to make informed decisions. Guidelines support professional judgement and promote appropriate decision-making in practice.

The systemic change to the health care system and care delivery models are being driven by and affected by, the number, deployment and utilization of nursing resources. The ongoing changes to skill mix and service delivery models create new working relationships between registered nurses and other nursing care providers. RNs need a clear understanding of how these changes affect their professional practice as they are increasingly required to work with others to achieve positive patient outcomes.

While other regulated providers may have responsibility for assignment* and delegation* to unregulated care providers, this document only addresses issues related to registered nurses.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the responsibilities and accountabilities* of registered nurses when assigning or delegating tasks to unregulated care providers (UCPs).

Registered nurses should be aware of employer policies that outline responsibilities and accountabilities of registered nurses in assigning and delegating to unregulated care providers. Assigning and delegating can be very complicated, depending on the situation in which they occur.

Some of the terms in this document are defined in the glossary section. These terms are marked with an asterisk (*).



Working with Unregulated Care Providers: Overview

Assigning and delegating tasks to unregulated care providers is an increasing part of a registered nurse's practice in many practice settings in New Brunswick. NANB supports that the concept of assignment* and delegation* by registered nurses are different and recognizes that registered nurses have distinct responsibilities and accountabilities when assigning tasks or delegating tasks to unregulated care providers. It is important that registered nurses understand the difference between assignment and delegation and the circumstances within which each of these can safely take place.

Unregulated care providers are paid care providers who are neither registered nor licensed by a regulatory body and who have no legally defined scope of practice. Unregulated care providers do not have mandatory education or practice standards. Unregulated care providers include, but are not limited to, resident care aides, home support workers, patient care attendants and special education assistants. Their work settings include, but are not limited to, client homes, group homes, residential care facilities, long term care facilities, hospitals and schools.



Assigning Tasks to Unregulated Care Providers

Assignment occurs when the required task* falls within the unregulated care provider's role description and training, as defined by the employer. The employer is responsible and accountable for developing role descriptions* that clearly outline the tasks that can be assigned to an unregulated care provider in that agency/health authority.

Employers should ensure that the unregulated care provider has completed appropriate training. The unregulated care provider's immediate manager/supervisor is responsible and accountable for providing ongoing overall supervision to assess the unregulated care provider's ability to perform tasks within the role description. Unregulated care providers are accountable to their employer, like any other employee, for their performance.

The registered nurse is responsible and accountable for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation. After determining care needs, the registered nurse can assign tasks*, not clients or functions*, to unregulated care providers. The registered nurse is responsible and accountable for assigning tasks within the role description of the unregulated care provider and for providing guidance to the unregulated care provider. The employer is responsible for making the role description of the unregulated care provider available to the registered nurse assigning the tasks.

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 care provider is unable to do an assigned task or completes it in an unethical way). Interventions may include guidance, teaching and direction, clarification of the care plan and, if necessary, reporting to the unregulated care provider's immediate manager/supervisor.



Delegating Tasks to Unregulated Care Providers

Delegating to an unregulated care provider occurs when the required task is performed primarily by registered nurses and is outside the role description and training of the unregulated care provider. The delegated task is always client-specific and the delegation is determined to be in that client's best interest.

As with assigning, registered nurses delegate tasks to unregulated care providers. The registered nurse is responsible and accountable for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and evaluation of care. Overall client care and the decision-making used to determine that care cannot be delegated. The delegating registered nurse is responsible and accountable for providing ongoing supervision to assess the unregulated care provider's ability to perform the delegated task. The unregulated care provider is accountable to the delegating registered nurse for performing the delegated task as taught and for reporting to the delegating registered nurse according to the care plan and agency policies.

There are two parts to delegation: the decision to delegate and the process of delegating. When making the decision to delegate, registered nurses must consider factors related to the client, the delegated task, the care environment and the unregulated care provider(s). Once the decision to delegate has been made, the registered nurse begins the process of delegating the task by ensuring that the unregulated care provider has the necessary knowledge, skills, and supervision, including support to perform the task within the clearly defined limits. Delegation is client-specific, meaning that the unregulated care provider must not perform the delegated task with another client unless it is also delegated to the unregulated care provider by a registered nurse.

In general, delegation to unregulated care providers requires a client in stable condition* and a predictable response to care where the competency of a registered nurse or another regulated provider is not required. Appropriate training and supervision, including support for the unregulated care provider, are also critical issues to consider in the decision to delegate. If, once the decision to delegate has been made, any of these factors change, the registered nurse may decide at any point not to proceed with the delegation of the task. Issues of the client's best interest must be considered at each stage of the decision to delegate.

See table 1 for a more detailed overview of registered nurse assignment and delegation to unregulated care providers.



**TABLE 1: Registered Nurse Assignment and Delegation
to Unregulated Care Providers**

ISSUE	ASSIGNMENT	DELEGATION
Definitions	<p>Assignment occurs when the required task falls within the unregulated care provider's role description and training, as defined by the employer.</p> <p>The employer is responsible and accountable for deciding which tasks are included in the role description.</p> <p>The unregulated care provider is accountable to her/his employer for their overall performance of their role description. The registered nurse remains responsible for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation.</p>	<p>Delegation occurs when the required task is performed primarily by registered nurses and is outside the role description and training of an unregulated care provider. The delegated task is client-specific and the delegation is determined to be in that client's best interest.</p> <p>The employer is responsible and accountable to ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support the RN in delegating to UCPs. 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 care provider to perform the delegated task.</p> <p>The unregulated care provider is accountable to the delegating registered nurse for the performance of the delegated task. The registered nurse remains responsible for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation.</p>
Similarities between assignment and delegation	<p>Only tasks, not functions can be assigned.</p> <p>The registered nurse has ongoing responsibility and accountability for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation.</p>	<p>Only tasks, not functions, can be delegated.</p> <p>The registered nurse has ongoing responsibility and accountability for the overall assessment, determination of client status, care planning, interventions and care evaluation.</p>
Differences between assignment and delegation	<p>Assignment is not client-specific.</p> <p>The role description outlines the limits of the task that is assigned to the unregulated care provider.</p> <p>The assigning registered nurse must assign tasks within the role description of the unregulated care provider and provide guidance to the unregulated care provider.</p> <p>The unregulated care provider's employer is responsible and accountable for providing ongoing supervision to assess the overall performance of the unregulated care provider.</p>	<p>Delegation is always client-specific.</p> <p>The delegating registered nurse determines the limits of the task that is delegated to the unregulated care provider.</p> <p>The delegating registered nurse must determine that the unregulated care provider has the knowledge and skill to perform the task within the clearly defined limits.</p> <p>The delegating registered nurse is responsible and accountable for providing ongoing supervision to assess the unregulated care provider's ability to perform the delegated task.</p>

Additional Resources

- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2005). *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses*. Fredericton: Author.
<http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/practice/StandardsofRegisteredNursesE.pdf>
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick and Association New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses (2009). *Working Together: A Framework for the Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse*. Fredericton: Authors.
http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Working_Together_Final.pdf
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2002). *Delegating Nursing Tasks and Procedures Position Statement*. Fredericton: Author. (Under revision)
http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/position_statements/DELEGATING_NURSING_TASKS_AND_PROCEDURES_E.pdf
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 3: Organizing Patient Care, *Info-Nursing*, spring 2008, vol.39, Issue 1, p.18.
http://www.nanb.nb.ca/pdf_e/Publications/Info_Nursing/Info-March2008-E-Final.pdf
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- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 5: Directing Care, *Info-Nursing*, winter 2008, vol.39, Issue 3, p.18.
http://www.nanb.nb.ca/pdf_e/Publications/Info_Nursing/INFO-Winter2008-ENG.pdf



Glossary

ACCOUNTABILITIES: The obligation to answer for the professional, ethical and legal responsibilities of one's activities and duties.

ASSIGNMENT: Allocation of clients or client care activities among care providers in order to meet client care needs. Assignment occurs when the required care falls within the employing agency's policies and role descriptions and within the regulated health care provider's scope of practice. Assignment to unregulated care providers occurs when the required care falls within the employing agency's policies and role description.

COMPETENCE: The integration and application of knowledge, skill, attitude and judgment required to perform safely, ethically and appropriately within an individual's nursing practice or in a designated role or setting.

DELEGATION: Sharing authority with other health care providers to provide a particular aspect of care. Delegation among regulated care providers occurs when an activity is within the scope of one profession and outside the scope of the other profession (includes both the right to order a restricted activity and to carry out the restricted activity). Delegation to unregulated care providers occurs when the required task is outside the role description and training of the unregulated care provider.

FUNCTION: An intervention provided to a client. Performing a function includes assessing when to perform the function, planning and implementing the care and evaluating and managing the outcomes of care.

ROLE DESCRIPTION: A detailed statement of the work done by unregulated health care providers in a particular position in an organization, which outlines the competencies required for that position.

STABLE CLIENT/CONDITION: One for whom there is no anticipated variation in care needs on a day-to-day basis; and who is managed by treatment that has predictable outcomes.

SUPERVISION: The provision of guidance or direction, support, evaluation and follow-up by the registered nurse for the purpose of achieving appropriate outcomes for the care which was delegated.

TASK: An action that is part of a client care function. The task has clearly defined limits.



Reference

College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (2007). *Assigning and Delegating to Unregulated Care Providers*. Vancouver: Author.

