



## You've asked a Practice Advisor:

"My nursing unit has recently moved to a team nursing care delivery model with Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). As the RN team leader, what is my responsibility regarding assigning client activities among my team?"

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### Background

**S**ystemic change to the health care system and service 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 patient outcomes. In many care delivery models, the RN is not the only health care worker offering nursing services to patients. Many models are based on collaborative work with nursing care provided by both RNs and LPNs.

**When working with others in a team nursing care delivery model, one of the responsibilities of the RN is the assignment of the nursing work and the establishment of the degree of oversight required.**

When RNs and LPNs work together, the nursing care delivery model must support collaboration and cooperation among the nursing team members, respecting the contribution of each professional, to help ensure safe and appropriate client care.

### Assignment Within the Nursing Team

When working with others in a team nursing care delivery model, one of the responsibilities of the RN is the assignment of the nursing work and the establishment of the degree of oversight required. Assignment within a team refers to the allocation of clients or client care activities among health care providers that fall within their scope of practice. Assignment occurs not only at the beginning of a shift, but throughout the shift as client needs change. The RN provides directions and clear expectations of what activities need to be performed, monitors performance, obtains and provides feedback, intervenes if necessary and ensures proper documentation. When accepting their assignments, team members are responsible and accountable to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the nursing work assigned to them and for communicating with the RN team leader as necessary. Although RNs are not responsible or accountable for another provider's practice, the RN needs to understand client care requirements and conditions to coordinate the care appropriately.

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RNs and LPNs each have responsibilities and accountabilities related to assignment, as outlined in Table 1.

### Additional Resources

The following other documents or resources may also be of assistance:

- *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses* (NANB, 2005)  
[www.nanb.nb.ca/pdf\\_e/Publications/General\\_Publications/StandardsofRegisteredNursesE.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/pdf_e/Publications/General_Publications/StandardsofRegisteredNursesE.pdf)
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, *Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 1: Professional Nursing Practice: Requisite Capacities*, *Info-*

**Table 1: Assignment Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

*Nursing, spring 2007*, vol.38, Issue 1, p.8. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Spring2007-Eng-Final.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Spring2007-Eng-Final.pdf)

- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, *Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 2: Professional Practice: the rule of three*, *Info-Nursing, September 2007*, vol.38, Issue 3, p.10. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Sept2007-E-Final.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Sept2007-E-Final.pdf)
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, *Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 3: Organizing patient care*, *Info-Nursing, March 2008*, vol.39, Issue 1, p.18. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-March2008-E-Final.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-March2008-E-Final.pdf)
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, *Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 4: Working Together*, *Info-Nursing, September 2008*, vol.39, Issue 2, p.12. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Sept2008-E.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/Info-Sept2008-E.pdf)
- 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. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/INFO-Winter2008-ENG.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/INFO-Winter2008-ENG.pdf)
- Nurses Association of New Brunswick, *Adapting to the New Workplace Reality: Part 6: Re-Tooling for today's work environment*, *Info-Nursing, spring 2009*, vol.40, Issue 1, p.16. [www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/INFO-Spring2009-ENG-Web.pdf](http://www.nanb.nb.ca/PDF/Info-Nursing/INFO-Spring2009-ENG-Web.pdf)

For more information regarding the RN responsibilities and accountabilities when working with others, contact NANB's Practice Advisor at 1 800 442-4417 / 506 783-8745 or by email at [nanb@nanb.nb.ca](mailto:nanb@nanb.nb.ca). □

Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practice Nurses and Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2009). *Working Together: A Framework for the Registered Nurse and the Licensed Practical Nurse*. Fredericton: Authors.

Registered Nurses	Licensed Practical Nurses
The RN making the assignment...	The LPN accepting the assignment...
is responsible for assigning and reassigning client care appropriately	accepts assignments from a care provider that has the scope of practice for the required care being assigned
must be familiar with the client population, the practice setting and the nursing practice within the setting in order to make safe and appropriate decisions about assignments	accepts assignments within the employing agency's model of nursing care delivery, which provides a reference about who is responsible for decision-making about client care, how work is assigned to staff and how client care is communicated
makes an overall determination of client status	is aware of own limitations of practice determined by educational preparation, competencies, knowledge, critical thinking and the ability to apply clinical judgment
decides which team member has the required competencies to meet client care needs by considering the client, the tasks and the practice environment	ensures clarity of role expectations and lines of communication
uses a collaborative approach to assign clients and/or functions and to clarify responsibilities related to the assignment	ensures consultation with others when requirements to provide safe, competent and ethical care exceeds personal limits (knowledge, skills and judgment)
provides support to team members providing care	ensures effective communication and collaboration when consulting with others
is responsible for identifying employer policies and supports regarding assignment, following the agency process for evaluating assignment decisions, and providing feedback to employers related to this process	is able to determine the client's complexity status on the continuum from less complex, predictable and probable outcomes to highly complex, unpredictable and potentially high-risk negative outcomes