



Fact Sheet: Responsibilities When Assigning Care Amongst Team Members

Changes to the health care system and care delivery models are influenced by nursing resources. These changes create new working relationships between nursing care providers. It is important for RNs to clearly understand how these changes impact their professional practice (ANBLPN&NANB, 2020).

When care is being provided by both RNs and LPNs, the nursing care delivery model must support collaboration, value of each professional’s contribution, and allow for role optimization for both designations. While it is important to ensure the scope of practice is respected, it is also important to consider the patient, the care provider, and the environment to guide decisions about care provider assignments. The revised [Nursing Intraprofessional Collaboration Guidelines](#) provide a collaborative framework to support nursing professionals and employers in assigning care.

One of the responsibilities of the RN is the allocation among nursing care providers of clients or client care activities. When client care is assigned to an RN or LPN, they may perform the assignment autonomously as they are accountable for their own decisions and actions. Nursing professionals are responsible for monitoring the status of the patient to ensure necessary changes are brought to the assignment to achieve quality client outcomes (ANBLPN&NANB, 2019). When any care is transferred from one nursing professional to another, the accountability for that care is also transferred (ANBLPN&NANB, 2020).

In the event the RN in charge oversees other health care workers remotely, it may be appropriate to provide direction on client care management at a distance, if the employer policy supports it and the RN feels she has enough information and understanding to provide direction. If the RN feels the situation cannot properly be assessed remotely, she should be prepared to take appropriate and timely measures to assess the situation, such as attending in person (CNPS, 2012).

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

TABLE 1: ASSIGNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

Registered Nurses	Licensed Practical Nurses
The RN making the assignment:	The LPN accepting the assignment:
is responsible for identifying employer policies and supports regarding assignment, following the employer process for assignment / evaluating assignment decisions, and providing feedback to employers related to this process	is knowledgeable of /understands the employer’s model of nursing care delivery, and the assignment of care policy 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
is familiar with the client population, the nursing practice, scopes of practice and the practice within the setting in order to make safe and appropriate decisions about assignments	is aware of scope of practice and own limitations of practice determined by educational preparation, competencies, knowledge, critical thinking, and the ability to apply clinical judgment



makes an overall determination of client status	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
decides which team member has the required competencies to meet client care needs by considering the client needs, the provider’ scope and competencies and the practice environment	ensures clarity of role expectations and lines of communication
is responsible for assigning* / reassigning client care appropriately (throughout the shift)	accepts assignments* with respect to the LPN scope of practice
*assigns clients to RNs / LPNs and client care tasks to LPNs / UCPs; remain responsible and accountable for providing supervision and feedback to the UCP	* are authorized to assign tasks to another LPN or UCP as client conditions permit; remain responsible and accountable for providing supervision and feedback to the UCP
uses a collaborative approach to assign clients and/or tasks 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)
monitors and provides support to team members providing care	ensures effective communication and collaboration when consulting with others

Throughout the assignment process, the RN needs to consider the client care requirements, the provider’s scope of practice and competencies and the practice environment to assign and coordinate care appropriately. Expectations, including responsibilities and accountabilities related to assignment of nursing care, must be made clear at every level within organizations and be understood by LPNs and RNs.

Additional Resources

The following documents or resources may also be of assistance:

- [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses \(NANB, 2019\)](#)
- [Nursing Intraprofessional Collaboration Guidelines. LPNs and RNs Working Together \(ANBLPN/NANB, 2020\)](#)
- [Practice Guideline. A Collaborative Approach to Assigning, Delegating and Teaching in Health Care \(ANBLPN/NANB, 2019\)](#)

For more information regarding the RN responsibilities and accountabilities when working with others, contact NANB’s Practice Consultant at practiceconsultation@nanb.nb.ca .



References

Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practice Nurses and Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2020). *Nursing Intraprofessional Collaboration Guidelines. LPNs and RNs Working Together*. Fredericton: Authors. <https://www.nanb.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NANB-GuidelinesRNsandLPNsWorkingTogether-Apr2020-E-1.pdf>

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Canadian Nurses Protective Society. (2012). "Info Law: Supervision". Ottawa, ON: Author. <https://www.spiic.ca/index.php?page=200&lang=en>