

FOR BCCNM REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES

Requisite skills and abilities to become a Registered Psychiatric Nurse in B.C.

What is the purpose of “Requisite Skills and Abilities”?

Canadians expect the health care system to provide them with safe, competent and ethical care. The British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM) regulates the profession of psychiatric nursing in British Columbia to ensure that Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) are able to provide nursing care that meets this expectation.

This means that people entering the profession of psychiatric nursing must meet certain minimum requirements of competence and professionalism. All RPNs must begin their careers with foundational, entry-level competencies and demonstrate the capacity to practice in accordance with the BCCNM standards of practice¹. The education of psychiatric nursing students must prepare them for this. In order for students to successfully complete their education and attain the entry-level competencies, they require certain basic skills and abilities. This document sets out what those requisite skills and abilities are.

This document provides the public and potential students with information about the nature of the activities that psychiatric nursing students need to perform and the general demands of a psychiatric nursing education. This information may be used by prospective students to identify their personal fit with the requirements for psychiatric nursing as a career choice. Counsellors, parents, friends and others advising or discussing plans with students may also find the information useful.

What informs the Requisite Skills and Abilities for psychiatric nursing?

The requisite skills and abilities must be viewed in the context of the realities of psychiatric nursing practice, which encompasses the domains of direct practice, administration, education and research. Most new psychiatric nurses start their career in the domain of direct practice.

¹ Standards of practice includes the Professional Standards, the Scope of Practice Standards, and the Practice Standards.

Psychiatric nursing is defined as the health profession in which a person provides the following services:

- Health care for the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health, with a focus on psychosocial, mental or emotional health.
- Prevention, treatment and palliation of illness and injury, with a focus on psychosocial, mental or emotional disorders and conditions and associated or comorbid physiological conditions, primarily by assessing health status, planning, implementing and evaluating interventions and coordinating health services.

RPNs work with people of all ages, regardless of gender, ethnicity or social situation in a variety of settings (e.g., hospitals, communities, homes, clinics, residential facilities, penitentiaries, and with those who are homeless). Psychiatric nurses plan, coordinate and provide care for individuals, families, groups and communities.

The core knowledge and skills of psychiatric nursing are derived from the nursing arts, healthcare, social and natural sciences. The practice of the RPN requires specialized knowledge about mental and physical health, mental and physical illness, psychopathology, pathophysiology, health promotion, disease prevention, and health care systems.

Psychiatric nursing focuses on various factors that influence mental and physical health. The profession recognizes the complex relationships between mental, emotional, developmental, and physical; the influence of social factors on mental and physical health and on illness; and the role of culture and spirituality in health promotion, illness prevention, and recovery. The psychosocial components of care, including the therapeutic relationship, interpersonal communications, and teamwork skills are fundamental to safe and effective psychiatric nursing practice.

What if I have special needs?

Anyone who has concerns about whether or not they have the required skills and abilities for admission to or progression through a psychiatric nursing education program should contact the program where they intend to apply. They may disclose and provide evidence of their needs to explore the kinds of supports they may require. In accordance with provincial or territorial human rights legislation, the educational institution may engage with students in an attempt to negotiate reasonable accommodation of their needs, such that they may be able to meet the requisite skills and abilities. However, there is a distinction between the right to an education and fitness to practice, which may need to be demonstrated in order to practice. Questions about fitness to practice should be directed to BCCNM.

Are there other requirements to become a Registered Psychiatric Nurse?

In addition to the requisite skills and abilities, those wishing to become an RPN must meet certain formal requirements for registration, including:

- Graduating from an approved psychiatric nursing education program;

- Passing the Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Canada Examination;
- Demonstrating that they possess the good character expected of an RPN;
- Providing evidence of English language proficiency;
- Providing evidence of fitness to practice; and
- Passing a criminal record check.

Complete registration requirements may be obtained by contacting BCCNM.

Requisite Skills and Abilities, with examples

The requisite skills and abilities are organized into seven groups, with examples of entry-level psychiatric nursing activities. The examples do not constitute requisites per se; they are included to illustrate the nature and kind of activities involved in typical entry-level registered psychiatric nursing practice. The examples are intended to mean “including, but not limited to” the particular examples provided.

Interpersonal:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate and maintain professional therapeutic relationships and rapport with individuals and groups • Recognize the needs of clients and colleagues • Interact with others in a respectful and professional manner • Accept individual differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains a calm presence with clients regardless of the client’s behaviour • Identifies that others have needs and perspectives that might be different from theirs • Able to establish a therapeutic relationship with individuals who may be avoidant, verbally or physically aggressive • Maintains professional boundaries with clients • Assists clients who may not understand or cannot effectively maintain personal boundaries without clear guidance • Recognizes and validates client perspectives and feelings

Communication:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak and understand spoken English well enough to avoid mixing up words and meanings • Write and understand written English well enough to avoid mixing up words and meanings • Communicate complex information effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elicits and attends to information from clients while taking a health history • communicates well with other health care team members about clients

Communication:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize own non-verbal signals and interpret those received from others while considering individual difference in expression and associated meaning • Use information technology • Communicate in group settings 	

Behavioural:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage own behaviour well enough to provide safe, competent and ethical nursing care • Engage with self and others to create a safe environment • Take direction • Respond appropriately in situations that are stressful or that involve conflict • React appropriately to giving and receiving physical touch and working in close proximity with a full range of clients • Fulfill responsibility as part of a team • Manage time appropriately • Behave in a professional manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets priorities in the face of multiple demands • Maintains a calm presence with clients regardless of the client's behaviour • Behaviour demonstrates understanding of professional boundaries • Uses interpersonal and negotiation skills to settle disputes and responds appropriately to conflict

Cognitive:	Examples:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember information over a brief period of time • Remember information over an extended period of time • Problem-solve to develop professional judgment • Reason to develop professional judgment • Exercise critical inquiry skills to develop professional judgment • Apply mathematical skills and abilities to do mathematical calculations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recalls clinical skills or constellations of signs and symptoms and diagnoses from previous clients • Uses past experiences to inform current decisions • Recall written, oral or taped information provided by either colleagues or clients • Calculates and verifies medication dosages • Critically analyzes patient assessment data • Chooses from potential interventions and recognizes untoward effects and intervenes as necessary

Environmental:	Examples:
<p>Ability to function in the presence of each of the following commonly encountered and unavoidable environmental factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noxious smells • Disease agents • Distractions • Noise • Chemicals • Unpredictable behaviour of others • Working conditions such as providing services outside a health care facility; being outdoors in adverse weather and difficult terrain conditions; shift work; working in isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerate the odor of infections, body wastes, urine, feces and vomit • Recognizes dangers in the client environment • Deals with unpredictable behaviour in others • Able to work a schedule based on 24 hours a day 7 days a week that includes days, evenings and night shifts of varying duration

Physical:	Examples:
<p>The ability to perform the following well enough to provide client care and participate in educational activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand and maintain balance • Manual dexterity • Move within limited spaces • Push and pull • Perform repetitive movements • Perform complex sequences of hand-eyecoordination • Bend • Reach • Lift • Walk • Climb • Carry objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes a sterile dressing on a wound • Prepares and administers medications by injection • Performs urinary catheterization • Assists a person to get out of bed and walk • Performs cardiopulmonary resuscitation • Climbs stairs for a home care visit

Sensory:	Examples:
<p>Ability to perceive with each of the following senses well enough to provide care and participate in educational activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight • Hearing • Touch • Smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels a client’s pulse • Hears heart and breath sounds accurately • Reads the small print on medication packages and bottles • Reads numbers and lines of demarcation on a syringe • Hears alarms on equipment • Hears client’s voice or sounds of other clients when they are not visible or in the immediate area • Perceives differences in temperature with hand touch • Able to recognize abnormal odors.

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900 – 200 Granville St
 Vancouver, BC V6C 1S4
 Canada

www.bccnm.ca

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