

PRACTICE STANDARD FOR BCCNM REGISTERED NURSES (CERTIFIED PRACTICE)

Registered Nurse (Certified Practice): Acting within Autonomous Scope of Practice

Introduction

The *Registered Nurse (Certified Practice): Acting within Autonomous Scope of Practice* standards, limits, and conditions apply to registered nurses who have met BCCNM requirements to be certified by BCCNM in one or more of the following certified practice designations:

- Reproductive Health (Contraceptive Management) Certified
- Reproductive Health (Sexually Transmitted Infections) Certified
- Remote Practice Certified
- RN First Call Certified
- Opioid Use Disorder Certified

Certified practice registered nurses are authorized to:

- Perform certain restricted activities within their autonomous scope of practice per section 8 (restricted activities for certified practice registrants) of the [Nurses \(Registered\) and Nurse Practitioners Regulation](#).
- Diagnose a disease, disorder, or condition and treat by prescribing, compounding, dispensing, administering, or ordering medications according to their certified practice designation.
- Make a nursing diagnosis and treat conditions that are within the autonomous scope of general registered nurse practice and the nurse's individual competence.

Acting within autonomous scope of practice refers to certified practice registered nurses:

- Assuming accountability and responsibility for making decisions about client care, and
- Performing activities that they are competent and allowed to perform **without a client-specific order**.

Certified practice registered nurses may provide care or services to clients in keeping with the four controls on practice and by acting within their autonomous scope of practice when the care or services are:

1. Within the certified practice registered nurse's autonomous scope of practice (without an order),
2. Provided in alignment with BCCNM standards, limits, and conditions,
3. Allowed by organizational/employer policies, processes, and
4. Within the certified practice registered nurse's individual competence.

Certified practice RNs who **prescribe** also follow the *Registered Nurse (Certified Practice): Prescribing* standards when prescribing a medication to be dispensed by a **pharmacist** for use by a specific client.

Certified practice RNs follow the standards for *Registered Nurse: Acting by Giving Client-specific Orders* when **giving a client-specific order** (such as dispensing or administering a medication to a client) to be acted on by another nurse (RN, LPN or RPN) or other health professional, other than a pharmacist.

Certified practice RNs who perform activities within general registered nurse practice also follow the *Registered Nurse: Acting within Autonomous Scope of Practice* standards, limits, and conditions.

Standards

1. Certified practice registered nurses are accountable and responsible when they make a decision that the client's condition would benefit from an activity and act within autonomous scope of practice to perform the activity.
2. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice ensure that the activity they will perform is:
 - a. Within the scope of practice for certified practice registered nurses acting without a client-specific order as set out in the *Nurses (Registered)* and *Nurse Practitioners Regulation*,
 - b. Consistent with BCCNM's standards of practice including standards, limits, and conditions,
 - c. Consistent with organizational/employer policies, processes, restrictions, and
 - d. Within the nurse's individual competence.
3. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice ensure they have the competence to:
 - a. Make decisions about whether the client would benefit from the activity, having considered:
 - i. Potential risks to the client and how to minimize those risks,
 - ii. The benefits to the client,
 - iii. The predictability of outcomes of performing the activity, and
 - iv. Other relevant factors specific to the client or situation,

- b. Carry out the activity safely and ethically, and
 - c. Safely manage the intended and unintended outcomes of performing the activity.
4. Before performing an activity within autonomous scope of practice, certified practice registered nurses consider applicable employer/organizational policies, processes, and resources, and other relevant human and system factors that may impact their ability to:
 - a. Perform the activity competently and safely within their practice setting, and
 - b. To manage intended and unintended outcomes of the activity.
5. Certified practice registered nurses perform advanced activities within their autonomous scope of practice only when they have obtained the additional education, training and/or clinical experience needed to gain and maintain the competence to perform the activity safely.
6. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice identify the effect of their own values, beliefs, and experiences in decision-making, recognize potential conflicts, and take action for the needs of the client to be met.
7. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice use current evidence to support their decision-making and the activity to be performed.
8. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice follow a clinical decision-making process when they:
 - a. Assess the client's health status,
 - b. Make a diagnosis of a disease, disorder or condition that is within the autonomous scope of the nurse's certified practice designation and individual competence,
 - c. Determine a plan of care,
 - d. Determine an activity to be performed,
 - e. Implement an activity to prevent, treat, or palliate an illness or injury and/or improve, ameliorate, or resolve a condition,
 - f. Change or cancel a client-specific order for activities within the nurse's autonomous scope of practice,
 - g. Give a client-specific order,
 - h. Manage the intended and unintended consequences of carrying out the activity,
 - i. Manage and evaluate the outcomes of the activity.
9. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice communicate and collaborate with the client (or their substitute decision-maker) about diagnoses, decisions, actions,

and outcomes to support the client to be an active participant in making informed decisions about the care to meet the client's needs.

10. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice communicate and collaborate with the health care team about diagnoses, decisions, actions, and outcomes.
11. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice communicate and collaborate with the health care professional who gave the order (or their delegate), the client, and other members of the health care team when changing or cancelling a client-specific order for activities that are within the nurse's autonomous scope of practice and individual competence.
12. Certified practice registered nurses acting within autonomous scope of practice consult with, or refer clients to, other health care professionals when:
 - a. The needs of the client exceed their scope of practice or individual competence,
 - b. Required by organizational/employer policies or processes, or
 - c. Client care would benefit from the expertise of other health care professionals.

Glossary

Additional education: Additional education is structured education (e.g., workshop, course, program of study) designed for the nurse to attain the competencies required to carry out a specific activity. Additional education

- Builds on the entry-level competencies
- Identifies the competencies expected of learners on completion of the education,
- Includes both theory and application to practice, and
- Includes an objective evaluation of learners' competencies on completion of the education.

Advanced activities: Activities that are within a nurse's scope of practice but require additional education, training and/or clinical experience that build on the foundational knowledge, skills, and judgement attained during entry-level nursing education.

Competence: The integration and application of current knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment required to perform safely, ethically, and appropriately within an individual's practice.

Competencies: The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment required to provide safe, competent, and ethical care within an individual's practice or in a designated role or setting.

Decision support tools (DSTs): Evidence-based documents used by nurses to support clinical judgment and decision-making by guiding the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of client-specific clinical problems. DSTs come in various forms and are created by organizations or specialists in a specific area of health care.

BCCNM limits and conditions for registered nurses (certified practice)

1. Certified practice registered nurses must successfully complete the relevant certified practice education program approved by BCCNM as set out in *Table 1*:

Table 1: RN Certified Practice education programs required and approved by BCCNM

Certified Practice	Certified Practice Education Program
Reproductive Health: Contraceptive Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT): Contraceptive Management
Reproductive Health: Sexually Transmitted Infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC): Sexually Transmitted Infections Management OR British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT): Sexually Transmitted Infections
Remote Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC): Remote Nursing
RN First Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC): RN First Call
Opioid Use Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU): Provincial Opioid Addiction Treatment Support Program—Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses

2. Certified practice registered nurses must diagnose and treat only those diseases, disorders, or conditions or provide contraceptive management as outlined in the competencies of the BCCNM approved certified practice education program for their certified practice designation and as set out in *Table 2*.¹
3. Certified practice registered nurses must follow the decision support tools for their certified practice designation(s), and only diagnose and treat diseases, disorders, or conditions, including the prescribing, compounding, dispensing, administering or ordering of medications and ordering of diagnostic tests, as outlined in the decision support tools for their certified practice designation(s) and as set out in *Table 2*.

¹ Certified practice registered nurses may also diagnose and treat conditions that are within the autonomous scope of general RN practice and the nurse's individual competence.

Table 2: The diagnosis and treatment of diseases, disorders, conditions by Certified Practice RNs in accordance with decision support tools

Certified Practice: Reproductive Health – Contraceptive Management	
Decision Support Tools	Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia (NNPBC) Certified Practice Reproductive Health- Contraceptive Management Decision Support Tools (NNPBC: RN Certified Practice Decision Support Tools & Competencies)
Diseases, Disorders, Conditions	May prescribe, dispense, administer, insert, or remove contraception.
Drug Schedules² and Therapeutic Classes	Schedule I: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sex Hormones (hormonal contraception) Schedule II/III/unscheduled
Certified Practice: Reproductive Health - Sexually Transmitted Infections	
Decision Support Tools	British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Certified Practice Decision Support Tools for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) (BCCDC: STI Certified Practice)
Diseases, Disorders, Conditions	May diagnose and treat the following diseases and disorders: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chlamydia Trachomatis Neisseria Gonorrhoea Mucopurulent Cervicitis Trichomoniasis Bacterial Vaginosis Urethritis /Recurrent urethritis Lower Urinary Tract Infection Genital Warts Treatment of contacts of those with sexually transmitted infections
Drug Schedules² and Therapeutic Classes	Schedule I: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Antibacterials Antivirals Antiprotozoals Antimitotics Schedule II/III/unscheduled

² Drug schedules and definitions for Unscheduled, Schedule I, Schedule II, Schedule III: [Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act: Drug Schedules Regulation](#).

Certified Practice: Remote Practice	
Decision Support Tools	Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia (NNPBC) Certified Practice Remote Practice Decision Support Tools (RN Certified Practice Decision Support Tools & Competencies – NNPBC)
Diseases, Disorders, Conditions	<p>May diagnose and treat the following diseases, disorders, and conditions for pediatric and adult clients unless indicated as adult only:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eye: conjunctivitis, minor corneal abrasion 2. Ear-Nose-Throat: acute otitis media, pharyngitis, ceruminosis (adult only), dental abscess (adult only) 3. Genitourinary: urinary tract infection 4. Respiratory: acute bronchitis (adult only) 5. Integumentary: abscess and furuncle (adult only), cellulitis, impetigo, bites 6. Pain: use of nitrous oxide/oxygen for pain management (adult only)
Drug Schedules² and Therapeutic Classes	<p>Schedule I:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antibacterials 2. Antivirals 3. Antiprotozoals 4. Antihistamines 5. Bronchodilators <p>Schedule II/III/unscheduled</p>
Certified Practice: RN First Call	
Decision Support Tools	Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia (NNPBC) Certified Practice RN First Call Decision Support Tools (NNPBC: RN Certified Practice Decision Support Tools & Competencies)
Diseases, Disorders, Conditions	<p>May diagnose and treat the following diseases and disorders and conditions for pediatric and adult clients unless indicated as adult only:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eye: Conjunctivitis, minor corneal abrasion; 2. Ear-Nose-Throat: Acute otitis media, pharyngitis, dental abscess (adult only); 3. Urinary Tract: Lower urinary tract infection (adult only).
Drug Schedules² and Therapeutic Classes	<p>Schedule I:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antibacterials 2. Antivirals 3. Antiprotozoals 4. Antihistamines <p>Schedule II/III/unscheduled</p>

Certified Practice: Opioid Use Disorder	
Decision Support Tools	British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) RN/RPN Certified Practice <i>Decision Support Tools for Opioid Use Disorder</i> (BCCSU: Decision Support Tools for Opioid Use Disorder)
Diseases, Disorders, Conditions	May diagnose and treat opioid use disorder
Drug Schedules² and Therapeutic Classes	Schedule IA: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opioid Agonist 2. Opioid Partial Agonist 3. Schedule I: 4. Alpha-Adrenergic Agonist Schedule II/III/unscheduled

4. Certified practice registered nurses must complete additional education and ensure they are competent before performing any new activity associated with their certified practice designation(s) and as identified within their certified practice decision support tools such as the addition of a disease, disorder, or condition, and its treatment; or changes or additions to treatment for a disease, disorder or condition or contraceptive management.
5. Certified practice registered nurses diagnose and treat diseases, disorders, or conditions or provide contraceptive management as outlined for their certified practice designation(s), including prescribing, compounding, dispensing, administering, or ordering medications, and ordering screening and diagnostic tests only when policies, processes and/or resources are in place for:
 - a. Ensuring continuity of care for the client, including appropriate follow-up of diagnostic testing results, questions about the prescription, and the monitoring and management of client outcomes related to their treatment plan.
 - b. Consulting with, referring to, or transferring care to other health professionals (e.g., nurse practitioners, medical practitioners, addiction specialists, pharmacists, primary care providers) about the treatment plan or as needed to meet the client's needs.
6. Certified practice registered nurses **who prescribe³ medications** associated with their certified practice designation must also:
 - a. Successfully complete certified practice education for prescribing medications that has been approved by BCCNM for their certified practice designation as set out in *Table 3*:

³ In these standards, the term "prescribing" is used to describe the issuance of a prescription for a medication to be dispensed by a pharmacist or pharmacy.

Table 3: RN Certified Practice prescribing education programs required and approved by BCCNM

Certified Practice	Certified Practice Prescribing Education Program
Reproductive Health: Contraceptive Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia: <i>Safe Prescribing for Registered Nurses with Certified Practice</i>
Reproductive Health: Sexually Transmitted Infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia: <i>Safe Prescribing for Registered Nurses with Certified Practice</i>
Remote Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia: <i>Safe Prescribing for Registered Nurses with Certified Practice</i>
RN First Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Northern British Columbia: <i>Safe Prescribing for Registered Nurses with Certified Practice</i>
Opioid Use Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU): <i>Provincial Opioid Addiction Treatment Support Program—Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses</i>

- b. Have a BCCNM-assigned prescriber number.
- c. Prescribe only when they have the approval or are recognized by their organization/employer⁴ as a prescriber.
- d. Prescribe only those medications as outlined within the decision support tools for their certified practice designation.
- e. Have access to PharmaNet and document review of the client's PharmaNet medication profile when prescribing controlled drugs and substances.

Copyright © British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives/February 2025

Effective date: June 2, 2025

900 – 200 Granville St

Vancouver, BC V6C 1S4

Canada

www.bccnm.ca

Pub. No. 943

⁴ For nurses working for non-health authority agencies or organizations or who are otherwise engaged with a third-party, the "organization/employer" refers to the agency or organization with primary responsibility for the care of the client.