

Fact Sheet – Mentoring

Nurses¹ in all roles, share the responsibility for creating a culture of learning. Learners with varying levels of nursing knowledge, skill, and judgement, are supported in developing and refining the competencies required for the provision of safe, competent, and ethical care. In the [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#), indicator 2.8 states that nurses “support clients, colleagues and students by sharing nursing knowledge and expertise and by acting as an effective role model, resource, preceptor or mentor” (p. 11). Furthermore, the [Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#) states that “nurses share their knowledge and provide feedback, mentorship and guidance for the professional development of nursing students, novice nurses, other nurses and other health-care providers” (p. 17).

This document outlines the principles of mentoring in nursing, and the professional and ethical responsibilities of nurses engaged in mentoring.

Mentor Versus Preceptor

In the [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#), mentor and preceptor are defined as follows:

Mentor: “a nurse who guides, counsels and/or teaches nurse learners (mentees) in their adjustment to new environments, roles and/or responsibilities” (p. 19).

Preceptor: “a nurses who teaches, counsels, and serves as a role model and supports the growth and development of a nurse in a particular discipline for a limited time, with the specific purpose of socializing the novice nurse in a new role. Preceptors fill the same role as mentors but for a more limited time frame” (p.19).

The Importance of Mentoring

- Nurses engaged in mentoring relationships help strengthen the nursing workforce while improving quality of care and patient outcomes.
- A nurse’s level of autonomy and proficiency develops best with collaboration and mentorship from colleagues, managers, supervisors and other members of the health-care team.
- Internationally educated nurses (IENs) benefit from guidance and direction from nurses engaging in mentoring relationships as they adjust to the context of the Canadian health-care system and the provision of care within it.
- Nursing students, novice nurses, IENs, those returning to practice or entering a new practice setting benefit from welcoming practice environments. Nurses who feel supported, valued, respected and nurtured will transition to practice with an increased ability to provide safe, competent, and ethical nursing services.

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term “nurses” refers to registered nurses, and nurse practitioners.

Key Principles of Mentoring

1. Novice nurses, IENs, those returning to practice or entering a new practice setting
 - require time to transition to their role, responsibilities, accountabilities, and setting;
 - practice to the full extent of their individual competence within the legislated scope of practice;
 - recognize their own limitations within their role and seek assistance when needed; and
 - develop their confidence, autonomy, knowledge, skills and judgement before they can mentor others, assume higher levels of responsibility or manage complex clinical situations and staffing decisions.
2. Comprehensive mentoring programs
 - help model safe, competent, and ethical nursing practice;
 - support the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and judgement to perform activities competently and proficiently; and
 - allow nurses to learn and assume their role and responsibilities.
3. For mentoring to be successful, employers and organizations are encouraged to
 - provide on-going education supports for nurses who are mentors;
 - dedicate resources and time for mentorship activities; and
 - communicate the importance of mentorship among nurses.

Role of Mentor

Mentorship involves supporting and guiding nursing students, novice nurses, those who are new to nursing practice in New Brunswick, and/or entering a new role or practice setting. Nurses play the role of mentor by

- assessing learning needs,
- providing opportunities for learning,
- socializing mentees to the workplace,
- supporting mentees in professional development,
- advising on work and learning opportunities,
- engaging in reciprocal feedback from their mentee, and
- modelling professional behaviours and attitudes (Rohatinsky et al., 2018).

Role of Mentee

Mentorship is a mutually beneficial collegial relationship and mentees also have a role to play by

- reflecting on their practice to identify their learning needs and goals,
- being receptive and open to feedback from their mentors,
- recognizing their areas of limitations and seeking assistance when needed, and
- providing feedback to their mentor to guide the learning process (Rohatinsky et al., 2018).

Responsibility and Accountability of Mentors

NANB's [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#) provide a foundation for nurses to understand their responsibility and accountability as mentors. Nurses are responsible and accountable for

- practicing in accordance with relevant legislation, standards, regulatory requirements, and employer policies;
- practicing in accordance with the Canadian Nurses Association's [Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#);
- continuing professional development, including compliance with the NANB mandatory [Continuing Competence Program](#);
- supporting clients, colleagues and students by sharing knowledge and expertise and by acting as an effective role model, resource, preceptor or mentor; and
- advocating for and contributing to quality professional practice environments that involves
 - treating colleagues, students, and other health-care providers in a respectful manner;
 - resolving differences in a constructive way;
 - refraining from any form of workplace bullying;
 - recognizing the power differentials that may exist between mentors and mentees by accepting reciprocal feedback to lessen the hierarchy that exists in the teaching/learning relationship; and
 - advocating for and contributing to established practice environments that have the organizational and human support systems, and the resource allocations necessary for safe, competent, and ethical nursing care.

"This content is adapted from the College & Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta *Mentoring-Practice Advice* (2019) available at <https://nurses.ab.ca/>".

Reference

Rohatinsky, N., Udod, S., Anonson, J., Rennie, D., & Jenkins, M. (2018). Rural Mentorship in Health Care: Factors Influencing Their Development and Sustainability. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 49(7), 322-328. doi:10.3928/00220124-20180613-08