

Ensuring safe, competent, and ethical nursing practice in B.C.

**PRACTICE GUIDELINE: WORKING WITH UNREGULATED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

As regulated professionals, individual LPNs undertake only those roles, functions, and activities for which they have demonstrated the required competencies. The responsibility and accountability for determining those competencies rests with the nurse and the nurse's employer.

**Definition:** Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) may be in a position where they assign client care, or parts of client care, to Unregulated Care Providers (UCPs). The required care must fall within the scope of practice and range of competencies of both the LPN and the UCP, and within the employing agency's role descriptions and policies. UCPs are not regulated through a regulatory college and have no legally defined scope of practice. Where LPNs are accountable to CLPNBC for their practice, UCPs are accountable to their employer for their practice.

**Foundations of Practice**

An LPN draws upon knowledge of human biological sciences, pharmacology, and health-promotion and prevention strategies while formulating and implementing the nursing-care plan, **as indicated by:**

- Utilizing a variety of techniques and resources, including pertinent information provided by the UCP, to gather information and make decisions about client-health status.
- Taking responsibility for routinely gathering pertinent client information from UCPs.
- Recognizing that the more complex and unpredictable the client's condition is, the greater the need for a care provider who is able to provide the full range of potential care requirements, to assess changes, re-establish care priorities, and recognize the need for additional resources.
- Demonstrating leadership skills by supporting others to implement safe, competent, and ethical care to meet client outcomes; educating and supervising care providers involved in the planning and delivery of health-care services; and educating and supporting others throughout changes to client care, nursing, and administrative practices.

**Collaborative Practice**

An LPN collaborates with clients, families, and members of the health-care team to promote best client outcomes when working with UCPs, **as indicated by:**

- Supervising UCPs either directly (i.e. available in the practice setting) or indirectly (i.e. available for reports and consultation, where the LPN is not on-site). Supervision involves guidance or direction and could include teaching procedures that are within the scope of the LPN and are part of the activities of daily living for a specific client that he/she would perform if able.

- Supervising UCPs through the sharing of information by being available for consultation/reporting and evaluating outcomes of the care provided by UCPs.
- Discussing circumstances when the UCP should notify the LPN about the client's status.
- Understanding that when two or more categories of health-care providers work together, safe and appropriate care can be best achieved through collaboration, communication, and cooperation among providers, respecting the contribution of each provider.
- Understanding that effective communication among care providers and within organizations is essential in order to achieve quality client outcomes.

### **Professional Practice**

An LPN maintains standards of professional nursing practice, professional conduct, and safety in the practice setting, **as indicated by:**

- Assigning care to UCPs in a manner that enables the LPN to function in compliance with the scope of practice for LPNs, as set out in the [Nurses \(Licensed Practical\) Regulation](#) under the [Health Professions Act](#), and [CLPNBC Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](#) and agency policies.
- Being accountable for decisions and actions when assigning to, teaching, and supervising UCPs.
- Advocating for current employer policies that are regularly updated and clearly communicated to all staff concerning the tasks and activities which may be assigned by the LPN, as well as to whom they may be assigned.

### **Ethical Practice**

An LPN understands and adheres to the ethical obligations and requirements of the profession when working with UCPs, **as indicated by:**

- Taking action to ensure client safety. This includes informing the employer of any concerns related to the conduct and/or practice of UCPs when providing client care.
- Ensuring that in circumstances where the care requirements can be met by more than one category of care provider, the outcomes of the care provided will be the same, regardless of who provides the care.
- Advocating for safe, competent, and ethical care when the assignment of nursing functions and activities is assessed by the LPN to be inconsistent with specific client needs.

## **Legal Practice**

An LPN understands and adheres to the legal obligations and requirements of the profession when working with UCPs, **as indicated by:**

- Understanding that agencies and administrators are responsible for ensuring the role expectations, responsibilities, competencies, and limitations of UCPs' practice.
- Clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities related to assignment of client care; if the employer does not make them clear.
- Understanding that when an LPN assigns client care or aspects of care to a UCP, they are allocating tasks that are within the educational qualifications, role description, and range of competence of the UCP. The LPN is legally liable for improperly assigning tasks.
- Understanding that UCPs are responsible for completing their assignments in a safe and timely manner. The assigning LPN shares the responsibility with the UCP for the quality of care delivered. The LPN is responsible for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the assigned care.

## **Key Strategies/ Actions for Ensuring Safe and Competent Practice**

On an individual basis, nurses can practice safely by implementing the following strategies:

- All care providers require access to supports and resources in order to provide safe and effective care. These include effective nursing leadership, sufficient and appropriate staff, adequate staff-client ratios, organizational support for collaborative practice, and sufficient time to discuss client care and needs with colleagues.
- If these conditions are not present, the LPN must advocate to the employer, and if necessary to CLPNBC, for resources to support safe practice and to improve client care on an ongoing basis.
- The Government of British Columbia has developed the [BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry](#). The registry is a database of "registered" care aides and community health workers. The BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry is offered to all care aides and community health workers who are employed or wish to be employed in B.C. by a publicly-funded employer. This includes acute care, assisted living care, long-term care, home, and community care.

## **References**

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