

How to Describe the RN Role

Question: When someone (another care provider, a manager, or a member of the public/patient) asks me what do I do as an RN that is different from other care providers, how should I respond?

A response to this question can be lengthy and detailed or brief and simple, but the response is essential for everyone (RNs and others) to know the RN role.

RNs are self-regulated health care professionals who work autonomously and in collaboration with others. RNs enable clients (including individuals, families, groups, communities and populations) to achieve their optimal level of health. RNs coordinate health-care services, deliver direct services and support clients in their self-care decisions and actions in situations of health, illness, injury and disability in all stages of life. In a variety of settings, RNs contribute to the health-care system through their work in direct practice, education, administration, research, and policy development.

In Saskatchewan, RNs have the authority through *The Registered Nurses Act (1988)* to perform and coordinate health services. According to Clause 2(k) of *The RN Act*, this includes but is not limited to:

(i) observing and assessing the health status of clients and planning, implementing and evaluating nursing care; and

(ii) the counselling, teaching, supervision, administration and research that is required to implement or complement health care services; for the purpose of promoting, maintaining or restoring health, preventing illness and alleviating suffering.

In Saskatchewan, all past and present approved nursing education programs have prepared graduates for the opportunity to successfully complete a national licensure exam. All RNs who have successfully completed the national exam and are held to the standards of practice as determined by the SRNA. Since 2000, the baccalaureate degree in nursing has been the required basic level of education for those entering the RN profession in Saskatchewan.

What does RN practice consist of?

- As coordinators of health-care services, RNs are team leaders in their practice environments. They perform complex, advanced assessments in a holistic way, and create care plans, provide care, make decisions about assignment and delegation to other care providers, and communicate with

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other care providers as they oversee and evaluate the ongoing care of clients.

- RNs obtain the broadest nursing foundational knowledge in clinical practice, decision-making, critical thinking, leadership, education, policy development, research utilization, and resource management.
- RNs use their clinical judgment, critical thinking, and leadership abilities to make evidence-informed decisions in all domains of practice, and to act as change agents, improving the system as

a whole, advocating for quality improvement in various settings and systems.

- RNs have the competencies to provide care for clients with care needs from low to high levels of acuity, complexity, predictability, stability and variability.
- RNs use their in-depth knowledge base and decision-making skills to assess and attend to both obvious and subtle cues, to note minimally discernible patterns in the data, to interpret and synthesize the information, and to promptly intervene to reduce harm to the client and positively impact costs to the health-care system.

As a RN, your brief response might include:

- I have the education that provides me with the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide care to patients, families, groups, communities and populations, across the care continuum, whether their care needs are simple or highly complex.
- I coordinate care, which involves the identification and organization of the health-care needs of the client. It includes assessment, assignment, care planning, supervision, ongoing monitoring, and evaluation of care, using the nursing process, with the overarching goal of positive client outcomes. It includes patient advocacy, discharge planning and acting on behalf of patients, in the context of involving others and

ensuring that patient needs are met by the appropriate members of the health-care team.

- I am a leader in the health-care team, and therefore work to build relationships and trust, create an empowering work environment, create a culture that supports knowledge development and integration, lead and sustain change, and balance values and priorities in order to promote healthy outcomes for the client, the organization, and the health care system as a whole.
- I collaborate, which means I work with others to build consensus on common goals, approaches and outcomes. I work to achieve an understanding of my own

and others' roles, mutual respect among participants, commitment to common goals, shared decision-making, effective communication, and accountability for both the goals and team members.

- I am accountable to the client, the profession, the public and the employer. Accountability is defined as the obligation to accept responsibility or to answer for (explain) one's actions to achieve desired outcomes.

If you have questions or would like to speak with a Practice Advisor as you consider your response to this question, please contact the SRNA Practice Advisement Team at 306-359-4200 or 1-800-667-9945, or by email at practiceteadvice@srna.org.

References

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