

Understanding Your Individual Scope of Practice¹- Fact Sheet

RNs/NPs often encounter situations where they must reflect whether they are permitted to perform a particular competency, i.e., it is within my scope of practice? Am I allowed to do this? This may be because the competency is not traditionally a nursing responsibility, or the RN/NP may not feel qualified or comfortable to perform the competency safely.

To determine if a competency is within their individual scope of practice, RNs/NPs must follow a clinical decision-making process and reflect on the following questions and be able to answer yes to each question before proceeding:

Is the Competency within my Legislative Scope of Practice? If yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.

- Does legislation (federal and/or provincial legislation) prevent me from performing this competency?
- Do I understand how legislation, employer policies, or the College's Standards of Practice and relevant documents impact my nursing practice and limits or authorizes my ability to perform the competency?
- Does the competency align with RN or NP scope of practice?
- Am I aware and able to meet my standards of practice?

Do I have the Necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Judgment to Perform the Competency? If yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.

- Am I the most appropriate care provider?
- Do I know what is required to perform the competency safely, effectively, and ethically?
- Am I educated to perform this? Was my education sufficient to gain the theory and practical experience necessary to perform the competency safely?
- Am I competent? Do I have the necessary knowledge, skills, and judgment to:
 - Assess the appropriateness of performing the competency?
 - Perform the competency?
 - Manage the outcomes (intended or unintended/unintended consequences) of care before, during, and after the competency?
- Is my knowledge current and based on best practice, evidence-informed literature, or research?
- Have I identified the potential outcomes? Do I know the associated benefits and risks of the competency?
- Will there be support for continuing education programs to maintain competence?
- Does the performance of this competency promote safe, competent, and ethical client care?

¹ For further information on scope of practice and the bibliography, refer to the most current version of the College's Scope of Practice Framework.

Is the Competency supported by my Employer and Practice Setting? If Yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.

- Am I authorized to perform this? Is this competency within my documented role/job description?
- Are there appropriate authorizing mechanisms (direct orders, care directives, etc.) in place to support the performance of the competency?
- Does my employer/organization permit, and support me to perform this competency on my nursing unit or in my practice setting?
- Am I aware of and able to follow any relevant employer/organizational policies and/or clinical decision support tools, practice guidelines or protocols, etc.?
- Are the necessary resources (human and material) available now and in the future to support me in providing safe, competent, and ethical care before, during, and after the competency?

Is Performing the Competency in the Best Interest of the Client? If Yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.

- Is this competency appropriate for this client at this time in this situation?
- Do I have the appropriate informed consent of the client? Am I aware of, and able to meet, the consent requirements appropriate for the situation (verbal, implied, written, substitute decision-making)?

Do I Assume Individual Accountability when Acting within my Individual Scope of Practice? If yes, the RN/NP is Most Likely to Proceed to Perform the Competency. If No, Stop and Consult.

- Do I assume individual accountability for my decisions and actions and for the related outcomes?
- Can I provide rationale for my decisions and actions?
- Would a reasonable, prudent nurse perform the competency?

If the RN/NP answers “yes” to all reflections, then the RN/NP is most likely able to perform the competency. If the RN/NP is uncertain or answer “no” to any of these reflective questions, then more information will be required before proceeding any further. The RN/NP may refer their questions to their manager and/or the professional practice department, etc. RNs/NPs are also encouraged to connect with a College Nursing Consultant: Policy and Practice if they have questions related to scope of practice.

Scope of Practice Decision Tree

