

## What is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN)?

An RPN is an autonomous professional who works collaboratively with clients and other health care team members to coordinate health care and provide client-centered services to individuals, families, groups, and communities. RPNs focus on mental and developmental health, mental illness, and addictions while integrating physical health care and utilizing bio-psycho-social and spiritual models for a holistic approach.

## Do RPNs complete a psychiatric nursing education program?

Yes. RPNs complete a psychiatric nursing education program from one of the approved psychiatric nursing education programs in Canada.

The psychiatric nursing education program provides RPNs with the theoretical and practical knowledge and competence to apply critical thinking and clinical and professional judgement in the provision of health care across continuums of health and illness. RPN education includes health promotion, prevention and protection, health maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration and recovery, as well as palliation.

RPNs have foundational education in basic medical-surgical nursing assessment and intervention, anatomy and physiology, microbiology, physical assessment, and pathophysiology to support them in caring for adults and children. In addition to general medical-surgical nursing skills, RPN foundational education includes in depth psychiatric, mental health, addiction-related and safety risk assessments, advanced communication skills and psychosocial interventions. RPNs are prepared for medication management with education in both general and psychopharmacology. RPN education includes a holistic view of health, including physical, mental, emotional, social, relational, and spiritual components with an understanding of development across the lifespan. The psychiatric nursing education program prepares RPNs to meet the entry-level competencies (ELCs) for the profession and provides the foundation for RPNs to develop further competencies once they are in practice.

The breadth, depth, and focus on mental health and addictions and advanced therapeutic relationships and communication distinguish psychiatric nursing education from other nursing programs.

## Are RPNs baccalaureate or diploma prepared?

RPNs graduate from a baccalaureate program or a three-year equivalent diploma in psychiatric nursing. Their education prepares them to meet the ELCs for RPNs. Individuals must pass the Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Canada Examination (RPNCE) and meet the requirements of the regulatory body before being licenced in their respective jurisdiction. For information related to registration and licensure, please refer to the College's Registration and Renewal page.

## Where do RPNs practise?

The practice of psychiatric nursing occurs within the domains of direct practice, education, administration, and research. RPNs work with clients whose primary care needs relate to mental and developmental health. RPNs practise in a variety of settings. Some examples include:

- Acute care hospitals



- Child and adolescent treatment programs
- Long-term psychiatric facilities
- Crisis teams and suicide prevention
- Community mental health programs
- Community outreach
- Substance use disorder/addiction programs
- Correctional health programs

### **Is an RPN the same as a Registered Nurse (RN)?**

No. RPNs are not the same as RNs. RPNs have a specialized body of knowledge of mental health and mental illness as well as foundational knowledge from biological and nursing sciences, and they possess a range of general medical and surgical nursing competencies.

### **What are some common psychiatric nursing interventions that an RPN can perform at entry-level?**

The therapeutic use of self is the foundational instrument that RPNs use to establish therapeutic relationships with clients to deliver care and psychosocial interventions. RPNs can provide complex psychiatric nursing interventions which include but are not limited to:

- Facilitating group process
- Conflict resolution
- Psychotherapies
- Crisis interventions
- Individual, group, and family counselling
- Assertiveness training
- Somatic therapies
- Pre- and post- electroconvulsive care

### **What are some common nursing interventions that an RPN can perform at entry-level?**

RPNs can perform required nursing interventions to address physical conditions, including but not limited to:

- Intravenous therapy
- Drainage tubes
- Care and maintenance of enteric feeding tubes
- Enterostomal therapy
- Skin and simple/complex wound care
- Metabolic screening
- Management of withdrawal symptoms
- Medication administration (oral and parenteral)
- Urinary catheterizations

### **Where can I find more information about RPNs in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)?**

For more information related to the Standards of Practice for RPNs, ELCs, Scope of Practice, and Code of Ethics, please refer to the [Practice Topics](#) page.