

# *The Nursing Care Plan*



**ANBLPN**

Association of New Brunswick Licensed  
Practical Nurses

**AIAANB**

L'Association des Infirmier(ère)s Auxiliaires  
Autorisé(e)s du Nouveau-Brunswick

**March 2021**

## Mission

The Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses (ANBLPN) is the regulatory body for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) in New Brunswick. ANBLPN's mandate is protection of the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate care. ANBLPN sets, monitors, and enforces practical nurse education, registration, and professional conduct. ANBLPN creates Standards of Practice, establishes a Code of Ethics, and develops and implements a Continuing Competence Program. Additionally, ANBLPN publishes documents to support the practice of LPNs in New Brunswick.

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## What is a Nursing Care Plan?

The Nursing Care Plan (NCP) plays an important role in providing quality patient care as it helps determine a client's treatment, ensures consistency in care and allows the nursing team to individualize care based on the needs of the client (Neeley, 2019). The terms *care planning*, *plan of care* and *care plan* are often used interchangeably, and its formation has long been a component of nursing.

Historically nursing care was often implemented by way of a routine that was functional and client's became names on a list according to interventions required rather than as individuals with unique care needs (Ballantyne, 2016). As care plans evolved, they became individualized and comprehensive plans used to guide nursing care and developed in collaboration with the client. Clients should be included in the care plan so that they are involved with the interventions rather than just having interventions done to them (NANB, 2020).

NCPs are designed to reflect a client's priority health care needs upon admission and throughout the duration of their care (NSCN, 2019). They evolve over time as client's needs change and are used to indicate the interventions required to address the client's needs as well as state the expected or optimal health outcomes.

The care plan also helps determine a client's level of predictability and complexity based on the health care assessment. Consideration must be given to a client's level of predictability and complexity to determine which nursing care provider can best meet the needs of the client (ANBLPN & NANB, 2020). All nursing professionals play a role in assessing and evaluating a client's health care needs and response to treatment.

## Nursing Roles in Care Planning

To fully understand the Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) role in care planning, we first must understand the differences between LPN and Registered Nurse (RN) practice and how it relates to legislation. Both LPNs and RNs are autonomous practitioners who make independent care decisions and as such, both are accountable for their actions and inactions. RNs, because of their increased breadth and depth of knowledge, practice to a broader level of professional autonomy. LPNs practice their professional autonomy in collaboration with other health care providers as per the LPN Act (2014). However, both LPNs and RNs are always expected to work collaboratively within the health care team.

ANBLPNs Standards of Practice state that LPNs:

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*2.5: Collaborate in the development, review, and revision of the plan of care to address client needs and preferences and to establish client centred goals; and*

*2.6: Develop and/or modify the plan of care based on the concepts of individual LPN competence, environmental supports, and client need*

*CCPNR, 2020*

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NANBs Standards of Practice state that RNs:

- 2.2: Establish the initial nursing plan of care based on a comprehensive assessment; and
- 2.3: Monitor the effectiveness of the plan of care and revises the plan as needed in collaboration with the client and the health care team (NANB, 2019).

Based on legislation and the respective standards, ANBLPN interprets this to mean that LPNs are *involved in the initial care plan in collaboration with the health care team*. Furthermore, LPNs may document their assessment findings to develop and/or modify the care plan within their individual competence. LPNs are expected to communicate their findings to the RN and continue to collaborate with the health care team on the NCP. Both LPNs and RNs must share their respective knowledge bases and perspectives about the client and work together on the plan of care throughout the duration of the client's care.

### Development of the Nursing Care Plan

NCPs are used to create evidence-based, holistic care, to record care/interventions given, and to measure outcomes because of the care/interventions that have been given (Ballantyne, 2016). The development of the initial NCP involves:

- Developing plans to address any unexpected, new, or worsened problems;
- Identify and coordinate initial care resources, referrals, or care to support clients in achieving their care goals;
- Customizing nursing interventions to manage complex or high-risk issues; and
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the NCP (NSCN, 2019).

Though LPNs are involved in all aspects of the development of the care plan, they must also do so in collaboration with the RN. RNs can independently develop initial care plans across all practice environments, whereas LPNs may develop the initial care plan *in collaboration with* the RN or they may develop a draft care plan that gets validated by the RN through the collaboration process. The LPN must share the draft care plan with the RN and the plan will be validated by the RN and LPN when both nursing professionals are satisfied that the NCP is meeting the client's care needs (NSCN, 2019).

An LPNs level of autonomy varies in relation to the client's needs (level of predictability and complexity), the nursing professional's competence and the practice environment. The more complex the client's needs and the more dynamic the practice environment, the greater need there is for the LPN to collaborate with the RN (ANBLPN & NANB, 2020). Due to the changing health care system, there may be practice environments where an RN is not available or part of the health care team. In these circumstances, LPNs may collaborate with the most appropriate health care provider to contribute to and develop the plan of care (NSCN, 2020).

### Client Assessments

Performing an assessment is the first step of the nursing process. Client assessments provide the foundation of the NCP in terms of its development and the results of the assessment provide a baseline

to evaluate the effectiveness of care/interventions given to the client. NCPs cannot be developed or evaluated without a client assessment being performed.

Both LPNs and RNs may collect client data from the assessment and record this data on the NCP. LPNs and RNs have an obligation to communicate and collaborate on any data they have collected from the client throughout the assessment process.

As per the Standards of Practice for LPNs, LPNs are authorized to perform assessments on any client and across all practice settings. However, when assessment findings are unexpected or rapidly changing, the LPN has a professional obligation to collaborate with the RN. The RN has a broader scope of practice due to their increased breadth and depth of knowledge and therefore they must be consulted with so that they can rapidly analyze, interpret and act independently on assessment findings that are unexpected or rapidly changing.

ANBLPNs Standards or Practice state that LPNs:

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*2.8: Apply the nursing process (assess, diagnose, plan, implement, and evaluate) to identify the implications of interventions that impact client outcomes.*

*2.10: Assess client and collaborate with the appropriate person(s) when client status is changed, new or not as anticipated.*

*CCPNR, 2020*

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## **Implementing the Nursing Care Plan**

LPNs may implement a newly developed modified care plan in collaboration with the RN. They may autonomously implement an on-going established care plan providing the client is meeting their anticipated outcomes. LPNs use established care plans to guide their clinical decisions and are expected to:

- Perform ongoing client assessments;
- Evaluate the client's response to interventions;
- Interpret findings by comparing assessment and evaluation data to the baseline data; and
- Adjust the plan of care based on their interpretations.

LPNs may autonomously revise or modify the NCP providing these changes are due to the client achieving their intended outcomes as they progress through the care plan. LPNs must communicate any revisions or modifications they make to the RN (NSCN, 2019).

## **Evaluation of the Nursing Care Plan**

Care plans are evaluated to determine if clients have met their goals. The evaluation is based on comparing the client assessment data to the expected outcomes in the care plan.

LPNs may autonomously evaluate a client's response to nursing care and interventions. If the responses are anticipated, the LPN may independently move forward with the plan of care. However, if the responses are unexpected LPNs are obligated to collaborate with the RN based on these findings to modify the plan of care.

## **Conclusion**

Nursing care plans are a valuable and necessary tool to ensure clients receive safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate care. When we assess and plan for client outcomes it results in positive outcomes such as increased communication among the health care team, clarifying whom the best care provider may be to help ensure the client reaches their goals and they also give the health care team the ability to determine the success of the interventions that have been implemented (NANB, 2019).

Positive patient outcomes are more likely when the entire nursing team is involved, and when they understand the client's goals and what the plan is to achieve those goals. Each patient is different and therefore, a 'one size fits all' approach will not work (Neeley, 2019). Individualized care plans developed with the client will empower clients as it allows clients to have a sense of control and the ability to contribute to their own health care needs.

The nursing care plan is a core function of nursing. It is imperative that LPNs understand the role they play regarding care plans and the importance of collaborating with RNs based on a client's needs and the practice environment they work in.

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