



College of
Registered Nurses
of Manitoba

Ethical Implications for Working in a Collaborative Team and Maintaining Confidentiality

Code of Ethics Application

The public expects safe, competent and ethical service from both the health-care system and registered nursing care. RNs need to apply the knowledge, skills, judgment and personal attributes required to meet these expectations.

This document interprets the CNA Code of Ethics (the Code) to clarify expectations of practice in two situations: when working in a collaborative team and maintaining privacy and confidentiality.

The values and ethical responsibilities outlined in the Code are expectations in all contexts and domains of registered nursing practice. They apply to interactions with all persons who have health-care needs or are receiving care, including colleagues, students and other health-care providers.

Working in a Collaborative Team

Collaborative practice in health care occurs when multiple health-care team members from different professional backgrounds work with clients, their families, caregivers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care with the client at the center. Practice includes both clinical and non-clinical health-related work such as diagnosis, treatment, surveillance, health communications and management.

There are two responsibility statements in the Code that indicate nurses foster quality practice environments and a moral community. Both of these statements support working in a collaborative team.

Quality practice environments have the structures and resources to promote safety, support and respect for all persons in the practice setting. You can contribute to a healthy work environment by:

- Maintaining the lens of safety, support and respect
- Becoming a skilled communicator to develop meaningful relationships

A moral community is a workplace where values are made clear and are shared, where these values direct ethical action and where individuals feel safe to be heard (adapted from Rodney, Buckley, Street, Serrano, & Martin, 2013). Coherence between publicly professed values and the lived reality is necessary for there to be a genuine moral community (Webster & Baylis, 2000).

To foster a moral community we have to recognize that all members of a collaborative team are moral agents in providing care. This means that they have a responsibility to conduct themselves ethically in what they do and how they interact with people receiving care. It's important for you to reflect on your practice, the quality of your interactions with others and on the resources you need to maintain your own health and well-being. In particular, there is a pressing need for nurses to work with others to create these moral communities that enable the provision of safe, compassionate, competent and ethical care.

A. Providing Safe, Competent and Ethical Care

12. Nurses foster a safe, quality practice environment.

14. When differences among members of the health-care team affect care, nurses seek constructive and collaborative approaches to resolving them and commit to conflict resolution and a person centered approach to care.

B. Promoting Health and Well-Being

4. Nurses collaborative with other health care providers and others to maximize health benefits to persons receiving care and with health-care needs and concerns recognizing and respecting the knowledge, skills and perspectives of all.

D. Honouring Dignity

14. Nurses foster a moral community in which ethical values and challenges can be openly discussed and supported.

F. Promoting Justice

Nurses work collaboratively to develop a moral community. As part of this community, all nurses acknowledge their responsibility to contribute to positive and healthy practice environments. Nurses support a climate of trust that sponsors openness, encourages the act of questioning the status quo and supports those who speak out in good faith to address concerns (e.g. whistleblowing). Nurses protect whistle-blowers who have provided reasonable grounds for their concerns.

G. Being Accountable

4. Nurses are accountable for their practice and work together as part of teams. When the acuity, complexity or variability of a person's health condition increases, nurses assist each other (LPNAPEI et al., 2014).

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

Nurses recognize the importance of privacy and confidentiality and safeguard personal, family and community information obtained in the context of a professional relationship.

E. Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

Nurses do not abuse their access to information by accessing health-care records, including those of a family member or any other person, for purposes inconsistent with their professional obligations. When using photo, video or other technology for assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation of persons receiving care, nurses obtain their consent and do not intrude into their privacy. They handle photos or videos with care to maintain the confidentiality of the persons involved, including colleagues and students.

The Personal Health Information Act

The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) gives people two primary rights:

1. the right to access your own personal health information
2. the right to expect that the privacy of that information will be protected.

The right to access includes the right to see your personal health information, get a copy of it, and request a correction to it. The right to privacy includes the right to know why your information is being collected, and the right to have that information kept confidential and secure by trustees who collect and maintain it.

Although you may have access to your own information, it's NOT okay to access your own health records. PHIA requires that you make the request directly to the trustee who maintains your records. For example, if the information you want to access is in a doctor's office, you should make your request directly to the doctor. The trustee may ask that you make your request in writing.

References

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