

ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

by Linda Muzio, RN, Nursing Practice Advisor



Question: “I have been a RN for many years and have never really reviewed the SRNA Standards and Foundation Competencies. What is their significance to my practice as a RN, and what does it mean to my continuing competence?”

Standards are essential to our practice as individual RNs and to the profession of registered nursing. They ultimately exist to facilitate the provision of safe, competent nursing care to the people of Saskatchewan. A standard is a desired and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be compared.¹ A competency is the demonstration, by a RN, of knowledge, skill and judgment, derived from nursing roles and functions, within a specified context.²

When a regulatory body such as the SRNA is granted the privilege of regulating the profession of registered nursing in the province, our legislated mandate is to protect the public. The SRNA sets the standards of registered nursing practice and related competencies to fulfill this obligation and in so doing says to the public, this is the level of performance you can expect from any nurse registered with us. It

speaks to the quality of care that the public can expect to receive, and is one of the main reasons why the public has such a high level of trust in RNs.

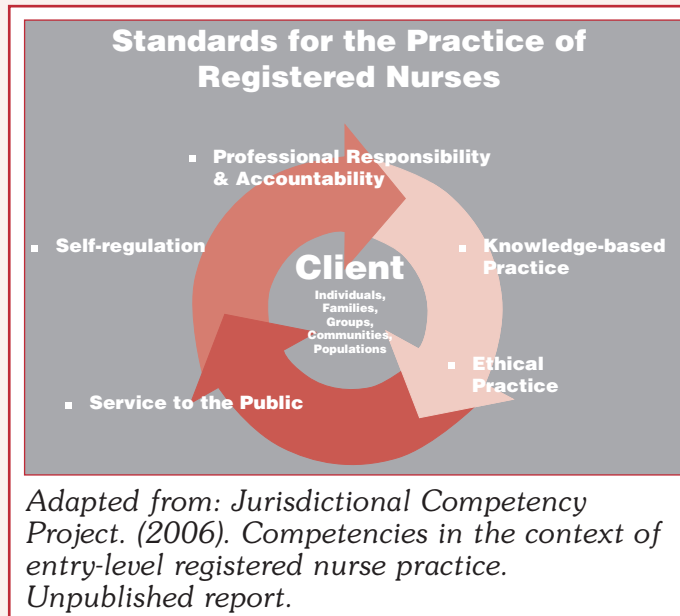
The SRNA has specific mechanisms in place to ensure RNs can meet and adhere to the standards. For example, the SRNA evaluates and approves registered nursing programs in our province, which incorporate the standards and competencies into their curriculum. Beginning in the fall of 2007, members must declare their participation in the mandatory SRNA Continuing Competence Program. A complaints handling process also exists to address concerns about the competence or

conduct of a RN member, and discipline measures taken if necessary to ensure that registered nursing standards continue to be met by practicing members in our province.

RNs will want to practice in accordance with the standards and foundation competencies, not only because we are held accountable for them, but because they provide guidance for our nursing practice, assisting RNs in resolving issues related to professional practice. For example, one of the foundation competencies in Standard III – Ethical Practice states that, the RN

“ensures that informed consent is provided as it applies to multiple contexts (e.g., consent for care; refusal of treatment; release of health information; and consent for participation in research).” If research is conducted and the RN is concerned about the process being used for obtaining consent, this competency supports the RN in taking those concerns forward and protecting his/her clients from potential harm. This is one example of how the standards and competencies set by the regulatory body and actions by the RN work together to protect the public.

Through adherence to the SRNA Continuing Competence Program, in which registered nurses review their level of competence against the 2007 Standards and Foundation Competencies, through self-reflection, feedback on their assessment, the development, implementation and evaluation of their learning plan, that the SRNA and individual registered nurses can continue to ensure safe, competent care for the people of Saskatchewan.



References:

- ^{1, 2} Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. (2005). *SRNA Glossary*. December 2005. Regina, SK: Author.