



ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

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As a direct care provider how does my leadership contribute to quality care?

Quality practice environments do not just happen. They are achieved through the culmination of initiatives that support professional nursing practice. This is done through effective leadership. "Nursing requires strong, consistent and knowledgeable leaders who are visible, inspire others and support professional nursing practice" (CNA 2002). Nurses at all levels and in all domains of practice possess leadership qualities and abilities and utilize these skills in their everyday practice to provide quality care.

Nursing leadership is an essential element for quality practice environments. The leadership of the direct care provider has a direct effect on the practice environment. The nurse in direct care displays leadership by advocating for clients, participating in the creation of policies and procedures, speaking out when unsafe practices are occurring and collaborating with patients/families and colleagues.

The direct care RN provides clinical leadership. This is displayed through being clinically competent and knowledgeable, and being an effective communicator. The direct care RN shows leadership

in decision making, empowering and motivating others and by being open and approachable. The RN at the point of care enacts leadership by speaking up and participating in unit functioning.

Another important leadership skill the direct care provider demonstrates is mentorship and role modeling. This support is required by new members of the profession as well as by RNs new to the country, province, facility or unit. Mentorship is vital in assisting with the transition from student to RN and from novice to expert.

Direct care providers can enhance their leadership skills by seeking out a mentor, and participating in informal and formal learning opportunities such as the Saskatchewan Institute of Health Leadership (SIHL). For more information on the SIHL program please contact the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Regina.

References:

Canadian Nurses Association. (2002). *Nursing Leadership*. Author: Ottawa.
Stanley, D. (2006). Recognizing and defining clinical nurse leaders. *British Journal of Nursing* 15, (2).