

Social Media

I manage several RNs who are active on social media. Recently I have seen some conversations that include negative postings about our workplace and several of our clients. What standard are RNs held to when their personal and professional lives mix because they self-identify or reflect on being an RN in a social media setting?

- Ethically and legally, RNs have an obligation to maintain professional boundaries, client privacy, confidentiality and security by complying with legislation, practice standards, ethics and organizational policies at all times (1 and 2).
- Registered nursing is a highly respected profession. Our clients come to us in their most vulnerable state and trust us with their most personal information. As such, RNs are always accountable to their standards of practice that include demonstrating a professional presence, practicing with integrity in all of their professional interactions and modelling professional behaviour (3 and 4).
- RNs should treat the virtual world of social media with the same professionalism as shown in the physical world. If you would choose not to say something about a client in front of others in an elevator, then avoid posting that same information in the cyber world (5 and 6).
- Confidential client information should not be posted. Even an unnamed client can be identified by others if confidential information is disclosed (7 and 8).
- RNs must not make disparaging remarks about employers or co-workers (7 and 8).
- RNs should avoid using social media to vent or discuss work-related events or to comment on similar postings by others (7 and 8). Work related issues should be dealt with in the work setting.
- RNs are expected to advocate for high standards of care and improvements in the health care system at all levels in the best interest of clients, especially when they are unable to advocate for themselves (9).
- RNs advocate for health equity for all, particularly for vulnerable and/or diverse clients and populations (10).
- RNs are expected to address concerns about standards of care through the proper channels, not via social media (11).

What is the expectation for RNs who want to speak out about unacceptable practices in or out of the workplace?

RNs are expected to advocate for high standards of care. Often RNs identify gaps in care or issues with the care that is being delivered, when others do not. RNs contribute to quality improvement initiatives that positively impact client care. The SRNA expects RNs will follow the proper channels to resolve identified concerns about client care from a system perspective and will attempt resolution at the lowest level. One resource available to guide and support RNs in addressing concerns is *Tools for Resolving Professional Practice Issues, 2009*. If concerns must be escalated to a higher level, RNs might consider contacting client representatives, the Ministry of Health Quality of Care Coordinators, Patient

Advocates or the SK Health Ombudsman. RNs should explore the most appropriate resources given their care concerns, attempts at resolution and context of care.

SRNA Resources

[Code of Ethics for registered nurses \(2017\)](#)

[Registered Nurse Practice Standards, 2019](#)

[Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies, 2019](#)

[Ask a Practice Advisor: Social Media and Professional Registered Nursing: Can the Two Mix?](#)

[Tools for Resolving Professional Practice Issues, 2009](#)

External Resources

[InfoLaw: Social Media](#)

[Social Media Guidelines for Nurses](#)

[A Nurse's Guide to the Use of Social Media, National Council of State Boards of Nursing](#)

[Am I Nurse 24/7?](#)

Resource Key		
Number	Resource	Reference
1	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 30, p. 5
2	Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies (2019)	Competency 2.4, p. 7
3	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 35, page 6
4	Canadian Nurses Association Code of Ethics (2017)	G2, p. 16
5	Canadian Nurses Association Code of Ethics (2017)	E2, p. 15 and E9, p. 16
6	Ask A Practice Advisor (2012)	
7	InfoLaw: Social Media (2012)	
8	A Nurse's Guide to the Use of Social Media (n.d.)	
9	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 31, page 5; and Indicators 45 and 46, page 6.
10	Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies (2019)	Competency 7.4, page 10.
11	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 21, page 4 and Indicator 54, page 7.

RN is used to represent all SRNA members including NPs and RN(AAP)s.