



Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory

TeleNursing Practice Standards

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Introduction

TeleNursing is a specialised expression of nursing which focuses on meeting caller health needs through assessment, triage and provision of information, using telecommunication systems, including web-based technology. TeleNurses, in most cases, face the additional challenge of not being able to see the caller and must rely on highly developed listening and communication expertise to effectively assess the needs of the callers.

Competency-based standards for professional practice in TeleNursing

Competency-based standards set out the necessary requirements with which to demonstrate a particular level of performance by combining appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes. They provide a process to observe the necessary attributes for job performance.

Purpose

The standards for TeleNursing have been developed to inform the public and to guide the professional nurse in the level of competence expected in the context of TeleNursing. They provide a foundation for public accountability as well as serving as a guide for the evaluation of nursing performance.

In order for standards to remain relevant at a time of change in the health and disability sector, these standards will be regularly reviewed.

Competency Framework

The five competencies and their associated criteria are intrinsically linked, it is essential that they are addressed, considered and implemented collectively, rather than in isolation.

Accountability

All nurses working in TeleNursing providing care to clients located in the Northern Territory must hold a current practising certificate which has been issued by the Nursing Board of the Northern Territory.

Competencies for TeleNursing

TeleNursing builds on the existing competencies required for beginning nurse practice, as determined by the Australian Nursing Council Inc.

The registered nurse in the practice of TeleNursing will demonstrate the following five specialty nursing practice competencies.

Acknowledgment

The Nursing Board of the Northern Territory gratefully acknowledges the assistance provided by the Nursing Council of New Zealand in the development of these TeleNursing Practice Standards.

Summary of Competencies

Competency 1

The TeleNurse demonstrates sound level of judgement, discretion and decision-making when communicating with each caller.

Competency 2

The TeleNurse practises nursing in a manner that the caller determines as being culturally safe.

Competency 3

The TeleNurse demonstrates sound clinical nursing leadership.

Competency 4

The TeleNurse monitors and improves standards of TeleNursing through active involvement in quality improvement and risk management processes.

Competency 5

The TeleNurse develops nursing practice through research and scholarship.

Competency 1	The TeleNurse demonstrates sound levels of judgement, discretion and decision making when communicating with each caller.
Indicator 1.1	Demonstrates effective clinical expertise when assessing and managing TeleNursing consultations.
Performance Criteria	<p>The TeleNurse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 Rapidly establishes a rapport with the caller to promote open communication that enables a competent assessment through effective listening and negotiation skills. 1.1.2 The needs of the caller are assessed using well-developed, empathic and reflective listening skills combined with nursing knowledge. 1.1.3 Systematically collects personal and health status data by exploring the caller's concerns, expectations, history and description of symptoms. 1.1.4 Appropriately applies clinical decision support systems, through evaluation of collected data and the establishment of the urgency of the situation based on an assessment of the individual's risk factors. 1.1.5 Promptly identifies emergency situations and initiates an appropriate course of action. 1.1.6 Uses contemporary knowledge of illness prevention and wellness, including health risk assessment, management of prevalent disease states, self-care management and education in nursing. 1.1.7 Provides health promotion initiatives designed to assist the caller to develop a positive attitude to health care. 1.1.8 Demonstrates confidentiality in dealing with all caller situations. 1.1.9 Documents the call in a comprehensive manner enabling satisfactory retrieval, auditing and referral. 1.1.10 Recognises and acknowledges limitations of personal knowledge and skills, and seeks appropriate assistance.

Indicator 1.2

Utilises specialty knowledge and experience to provide the caller with effective information and emotional support.

Performance Criteria

The TeleNurse:

- 1.2.1 Demonstrates a strong consumer focus when communicating with each caller.
- 1.2.2 Demonstrates clinical expertise in rapidly changing situations.
- 1.2.3 Demonstrates respect for the uniqueness of each caller and recognises influences that can impact on their health status such as cultural and spiritual beliefs.
- 1.2.4 Works in partnership with the caller through a process of negotiation to assist them to make an informed decision and plan the course of action to be taken.
- 1.2.5 Recommends options for referral, intervention and/or self care based on identified need and priority as indicated by the decision support systems and professional judgement.
- 1.2.6 Refers the caller to the relevant providers and/or services based on current information in relation to both local/national providers of services.
- 1.2.7 Recommends appropriate timeframes within which treatment/advise should be sought.

Indicator 1.3	Anticipates likely course of events for each caller.
Performance Criteria	The TeleNurse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3.1 Assist the caller and others to understand the consequences and potential outcomes of various choices. 1.3.2 Arranges follow up when necessary and through monitoring processes evaluates the effectiveness of advice and care planning. 1.3.3 Reports issues and/or trends requiring action to ensure optimal service delivery. 1.3.4 Communicates at regular intervals with other members of the team to ensure continuity of service delivery. 1.3.5 Facilitates continuity of care, where appropriate, through comprehensive documentation and collaboration with the caller, significant others, relevant service providers and agencies.

Indicator 1.4	Demonstrates effective organisational skills including time management and priority setting.
Performance Criteria	The TeleNurse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4.1 Maintains effective communication while efficiently managing the caller's needs and concerns. 1.4.2 Develops time management skills through ongoing education and support in order to appropriately triage and/or assess. 1.4.3 Facilitates the safe, effective and efficient use of TeleNursing resources.

Indicator 1.5	Effectively performs technical skills.
Performance Criteria	The TeleNurse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5.1 Is competent in the use of the telecommunication systems and associated technical support systems required to provide and record the consultation. 1.5.2 Participates in ongoing education regarding changes in technology where appropriate.

Competency 2	The TeleNurse practises nursing in a manner which the caller determines as being culturally safe.
Indicator 2.1	Applies the principles of cultural safety in their nursing practice.
Performance Criteria	The TeleNurse: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1.1 Practices in a way that is consistent with the requirements of the Australian Nursing Council “Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia”.2.1.2 Recognises the cultural impact of the medium of TeleNursing and endeavours to protect the caller’s wellbeing within this environment.2.1.3 Practices in a way which respects the identity of the caller and upholds his/her right to personal beliefs, values and goals.2.1.4 Assists the caller to gain appropriate support and representation from those who understand the caller’s culture, needs and preferences.2.1.5 Recognises own beliefs, values and prejudice that may arise in relation to the caller’s age, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, health status and/or disability.2.1.6 Recognises and acknowledges when ability to provide care is limited by own personal attributes and takes appropriate action to ensure the cultural safety of the caller.2.1.7 Avoids imposing prejudice on others and provides advocacy when prejudice is apparent.2.1.8 Validates that own nursing practice is culturally safe, including when providing direction or supervision.

Competency 3 **The TeleNurse demonstrates sound clinical nursing leadership.**

Indicator 3.1 **Actively participates in the healthcare team.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 3.1.1 Facilitates the development of positive working relationships within the healthcare team.
- 3.1.2 Participates in decision making which will enhance the delivery of the TeleNursing service.
- 3.1.3 Effectively contributes to the team through a professional approach to issues and feedback processes.
- 3.1.4 Utilises a range of communication skills to establish trusting and collaborative relationships with other nursing colleagues.
- 3.1.5 Works autonomously within the identified scope of practice.
- 3.1.6 Provides contemporary nursing advice to the healthcare team.

Indicator 3.2 **Contributes towards a positive role model for nursing.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 3.2.1 Contributes to the ongoing development of TeleNursing.
- 3.2.2 Approaches ethical issues using established frameworks and codes.
- 3.2.3 Assists other members of the team to participate in decision making.
- 3.2.4 Participates in and promotes self-assessment through reflective practice.
- 3.2.5 Assists in identifying learning needs, and participates in programs designed to encourage personal development in the specialty of TeleNursing.
- 3.2.6 Develops individual and peer support networks.
- 3.2.7 Facilitates an environment that encourages staff to ask questions, seek feedback and think critically.

Indicator 3.3 **Provides guidance and support to nurses entering the specialty of TeleNursing practice.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 3.3.1 Assists in orientation and ongoing education
- 3.3.2 Assists and supports nurses to identify and address TeleNursing competencies.
- 3.3.3 Provides guidance and support to other nursing staff when dealing with cultural, spiritual, ethical and legal issues.
- 3.3.4 Supports colleagues in decision making.

Competency 4 **The TeleNurse monitors and improves standards of TeleNursing through active involvement in quality improvement and risk management processes.**

Indicator 4.1 **Actively participates in the development, implementation and review of TeleNursing practice standards and quality improvement activities.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 4.1.1 Demonstrates the use of an evidence-based approach to improving TeleNursing practice and systems.
- 4.1.2 Actively participates in the design, implementation and evaluation of the quality improvement activities.
- 4.1.3 Actively contributes to the development and the review of the policies, procedures, guidelines and standards.
- 4.1.4 Initiates quality improvement processes that critically evaluate TeleNursing practice.
- 4.1.5 Participates in ongoing TeleNursing resource utilisation review.

Indicator 4.2 **Manages risk through compliance with legislation, protocols, policies and guidelines.**

Performance Criteria

The TeleNurse:

- 4.2.1 Actively participates in the design, implementation and evaluation of the risk management activities.
- 4.2.2 Practices within the parameters of relevant legislation and codes of practice.
- 4.2.3 Implements, or participates in, internal audit systems in order to evaluate compliance with identified standards.
- 4.2.4 Identifies, reports and/or takes corrective action in response to inadequate resources, errors of practice, ‘near misses’, incidents and trends.
- 4.2.5 Acts responsibly to any concerns relating to inadequate or unsafe practice, including notifying their employer, professional or regulatory body where required.

Indicator 4.3 **Gives and receives critical and reflective peer feedback.**

Performance Criteria

The TeleNurse:

- 4.3.1 Participates in peer reviews, clinical supervision and appraisals.
- 4.3.2 Contributes to systems that acknowledge excellence in nursing practice.

Competency 5 **The TeleNurse develops nursing practice through research and scholarship.**

Indicator 5.1 **TeleNursing practice reflects current nursing knowledge, research and understanding.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 5.1.1 Maintains competence through participation in continuing education regarding changes in regulatory guidelines, statues, practice, research and technology.
- 5.1.2 Identifies deficits in knowledge and skills and seeks appropriate education, training and supervision.
- 5.1.3 Understands the standards of professional practice and accepts professional accountability for meeting them.
- 5.1.4 Contributes and utilises TeleNursing research to improve TeleNursing practice, patient care, organisational effectiveness, individual nursing competency and quality performance.
- 5.1.5 Shares and publishes, where applicable, any outcomes of experience, wisdom, learning and research activities.
- 5.1.6 Actively participates in collaborative research, professional debate and development of nursing knowledge.

Indicator 5.2 **Critiques and judiciously uses clinical practice guidelines.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse;

- 5.2.1 Contributes to the ongoing evaluation and development of the systems and tools used by the service, in response to any new evidence from national and international literature, such as, critique of individual algorithms, protocols and guidelines.
- 5.2.2 Demonstrates innovation, flexibility/adaptability and supports others when managing or responding to change.

Indicator 5.3 **Demonstrates awareness of the impact of broader policies and directions on TeleNursing.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 5.3.1 Demonstrates processes to gather relevant information.
- 5.3.2 Applies this knowledge to each caller and personal nursing practice.
- 5.3.3 Uses this knowledge to change organisational systems.

Indicator 5.4 **Actively participates in caller feedback mechanisms from a nursing perspective.**

Performance Criteria The TeleNurse:

- 5.4.1 Initiates and/or participates in obtaining caller satisfaction surveys and makes appropriate changes to practice and service delivery based on findings.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purpose of these standards, the following definitions shall apply:

Accountability

The acceptance of personal responsibility for the decisions and actions taken, or not taken, as a nurse.

Advocacy

Supporting and assisting people to ensure their rights, beliefs, values and needs are recognised and upheld. Where this may not be possible they are listened to and are allowed to take part in decisions that affect them and their rights, beliefs, values and needs. All this is irrespective of their perceived competence or capability to take such action and should take cognisance of any Advanced Directives an individual may have made.

Appropriate

Matching the circumstances of a situation or meeting the needs of the individual or group.

Assessment

A systematic and ongoing process for the collection of information (qualitative and quantitative data) that describes the needs of the caller in-order to determine a requirement for services, describe progress and ascertain deviations from expected outcomes and achievements. The assessment process shall meet current best practice standards for assessment and shall include input from the caller, family where appropriate and other key persons where necessary.

Caller

Includes any individual contacting the TeleNursing service for health care advice either for themselves, or on behalf of others when the caller is not the “patient”.

Competence

Providing effective performance in a defined area of practice.

Competent

Displaying attitudes, knowledge and skills appropriate for practice as a registered nurse.

Competency

A defined area of skilled performance.

Consumer

The term consumer is used in these standards to refer generically to anyone who is the focus of care of the user of the health and/or disability service. Where appropriate this may include family group or significant others who are deemed to be the guardian, advocate, caregiver or nominated representatives of the consumer.

Criteria

Descriptive statements which can be assessed and which reflect the intent of a competency in terms of performance, behaviour and circumstance.

Cultural Safety

The outcome of nursing and midwifery education that enables safe services to be defined by those who receive the service.

Culture

The sharing of meaning and understanding.

Current Accepted Good Practice

Current accepted good practice involves the efficient and effective use of available resources to achieve quality outcomes for the caller.

The provision of services in line with the normally accepted range of practice within the relevant service group and reflective of current guidelines for that service provision where these exist.

This may include but is not limited to:

- Codes of practice
- Research/evidence/experienced experience-based practice
- Professional standards
- Guidelines.

Effective

Achieving the intended outcome.

Evidence-based Practice

Evidence-based practice is the process of improving one's professional competency by integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence, and by using the results of systematic reviews and expert opinion to ensure that one's personal practice is based, as far as possible, on sound evidence.

Facility

The physical location or site within or from which the health and/or disability service is provided.

Governance

Governance is defined as taking responsibility for the overall direction of the organisation, including the development of policy, which determines the purpose and goals of the service.

Health and Disability Settings

These standards are intended to guide practice in all settings, from the caller's home and community settings to the acute general hospital; from specialised hospitals for women and children to psychiatric units and facilities; from the premises of general practice settings and other private health providers to facilities in the aged care sector; and in other specialised areas including emergency departments and forensic facilities.

Management

This term denotes the exercise of management authority in a generic sense. The authority may be exercised by a senior executive, a delegated person, or by a collective body within the organisation, such as a board, committee or a self-directed team.

Organisation

Includes organisations, agencies, groups and individuals responsible for the provision of services to callers.

Registered Nurse

An individual currently registered by the Nursing Board of the Northern Territory Nursing Act 1999.

Reliability

The extent to which a tool will function consistently in the same way with repeated use.

Risk Management

The setting of standards and the implementation and monitoring of programs to eliminate or control all organisational hazards for clients, visitors, and employees in accordance with relevant current legislation and standards. The process includes risk identification, risk assessment, risk control and risk control evaluation.

Service Provider

A person who performs the health and/or disability service for, or on behalf of the organisation, group or agency, in the provision of direct and indirect care or support service to the caller. This includes:

- employed
- self-employed
- visiting
- contracted/session
- volunteer service providers
- or anyone who has a formal relationship with the organisation, agency or group to provide a service to the caller.

Service

Health and/or disability services including the provision of care, support and promotion of independence provided to the caller by the organisation, agency, group or their staff.

Suitably Qualified/Educated

Professionals who provide services (including clinical care or judgement) to the caller, with qualifications and registration required by statute to practice; or individuals with experience in the provision of care or support to the caller, deemed competent to perform this function by a recognised representative body. Where the above does not apply, the organisation will be accountable for ensuring the service provider is competent to provide the service required of them.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are all those who have the right or duty to ensure the highest standards of care and include callers and consumer organisations, the relatives and friends of consumers and other health care providers.

TeleNursing

A process of telephone or web-based consultation conducted by registered nurses using specific telecommunication systems, including web-based technology skills to provide access to health advice/information based on the best evidence available at the time.

Telecommunications

This includes the telephone, e-health and internet-based services.

Validity

The extent to which a measurement tool measures that which it purports to measure.