



# RNs Working in Special-Care Homes

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## Introduction

Registered Nurses (RN) have a professional accountability to provide safe, competent and ethical care for the well-being of the public (SRNA, 2021). This resource supports the professional practice of registrants of the College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan (CRNS) by providing additional guidance for RNs when working in a special-care home (SCH).

This resource addresses:

- the provision of 24-hour nursing care;
- RN Specialty Practices (RNSP) model that optimizes RN practice in the interest of the public; and,
- supportive leadership for the observance of and compliance with the application of nursing standards and competencies to foster safe, ethical and competent care in SCHs.

## Regulatory Authority

*The Registered Nurses Act, 1988* (the Act) provides the legislative authority for Registered Nurse practice in Saskatchewan. This resource, related to RNs working in a SCH setting, draws on the obligations of practicing registrants to adhere and to uphold the current *Registered Nurse Practice Standards, Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies* and Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. RNs have the responsibility and obligation to be aware of, to understand and to adhere to registered nursing practice expectations when practicing nursing in any setting in Saskatchewan.

## Special-Care Homes

In Saskatchewan, the term *special-care home* or SCH refers to a nursing home or other facility designated by the government and operated by the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), an affiliated or contracted agency of the SHA, or other organizations. These facilities provide long-term care, respite care, day programs, convalescent and palliative care services in accordance with the *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021). SCHs employ various care providers including RNs, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Unregulated Care Providers and other health care professionals to meet the care needs of clients.

In Saskatchewan, a facility that provides supervision or assistance with personal care, accommodation and meals are termed personal care homes (PCH) (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018). It is important to distinguish SCHs from PCH – PCHs are privately owned and operated businesses that are licensed under *The Personal Care Homes Act* and monitored by the Ministry of Health (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

## 24-Hour Nursing Care

RNs are an integral part of the interprofessional health care team and are well-positioned to provide and coordinate care to achieve optimal client health outcomes in their practice setting.

The *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* set the minimum standard of care that SCHs are expected to meet and are intended to ensure the provision of quality care that meets the therapeutic needs of the client (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021). *The Housing and Special-care Home Regulations* stipulates that:

- “nursing care by a registered nurse or a registered psychiatric nurse shall be provided on a 24-hour basis” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021a, p. 5); and,
- “the care of the guests [residents of a home] is to be carried out by or under the direction of a registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021a, p. 5).

These regulation requirements align with the expectation that RNs uphold their practice standards by practicing in accordance with current relevant legislation (SRNA, 2019a) and demonstrate accountability to the client, public, employer and regulatory body (SRNA, 2019).

## Registered Nurse Specialty Practices Model

SCH practice settings are ripe with opportunities for RNs to practice at full scope in the best interest of the clients. The optimization of RN practice to achieve the best possible health outcomes for clients is supported by the RNSP model. The RNSP model is a proactive approach that places the client at the centre and the RN as the point-of-care expert in the practice setting (SRNA, 2020).

The *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* in conjunction with the *Registered Nurse Specialty Practices Guideline* supports and facilitates the optimization of the RN scope of practice in SCHs through scholarship, best practice guidelines, appropriate resource allocation and policies.

The *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* recognizes RNSPs and Clinical Protocols; stipulating that RNSPs and Clinical Protocols are developed and implemented in accordance with criteria developed by the SRNA (i.e., *Registered Nurse Specialty Practices Guideline*) and follow principles set out in the *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2021).

## Leadership

Employers and practice settings support RNs to meet their professional and ethical obligations to minimize risk and maximize the safety, well-being and dignity of persons receiving care (CNA, 2017). Leadership can support RNs in providing safe, competent, and ethical care by, but is not limited to:

- adhering to the current Saskatchewan Ministry of Health *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* standards and recommendations and *The Housing and Special-care Home Regulations*; and,
- developing, implementing and evaluating policies and procedures that are effective in supporting appropriate models of care, a collaborative practice environment and an adequate staff mix of health care providers (SRNA, 2019; SRNA, 2019a).

## Empowering Nurse Leadership

In every practice setting, RNs can advocate for and support solution-based approaches for the facilitation of patient-centered care. This includes, and is not limited to:

- “providing and supporting leadership in nursing for optimal coordination and provision of care” (SRNA, 2019a, p. 6);
- advocating for equitable treatment and equitable distribution of resources and making fair decisions about the allocation of resources under the nurses control based on the therapeutic needs of persons receiving care (CNA, 2017);

- application of the *Collaborative Decision-making Framework: Quality Nursing Practice* to assist in determining the appropriate nursing care provider to achieve optimal health outcomes for persons receiving care (SRNA et al., 2017);
- informing employers about potential threats to the safety and the delivery of quality care through effective communication methods and approved reporting mechanisms (CNA, 2017); and,
- demonstrating effective collaborative practice by communicating respectfully, using problem-solving strategies and effectively managing conflict to create a safe care environment (SRNA, 2019a; CNA, 2017). *Resolving Professional Practice Issues: A Toolkit for Registered Nurses* may help support work towards the resolution of professional practice issues.

## Conclusion

This resource provides information to support the application of the standards and competencies for RNs working in a SCH. The provision of 24-hour nursing care coupled with optimizing the RN scope of practice is a proactive approach to support optimal client care outcomes. Leadership and employers can work towards the establishment and maintenance of care models, policies and practice environments that empower RNs to contribute to the provision of safe, evidence-informed and competent care for clients in Saskatchewan.

## CRNS Resources

[RN Practice Standards](#)

[RN Entry-Level Competencies](#)

[CNA Code of Ethics](#)

[RN Specialty Practices Guideline](#)

[Collaborative Decision-making Framework: Quality Nursing Practice](#)

[Resolving Professional Practice Issues: A Toolkit for Registered Nurses](#)

## External Resources

[Program Guidelines for Special Care Homes](#)

[The Housing and Special-care Homes Regulations](#)

[RNAO Framework: Healthy Work Environments for Nurses](#)

[Evidence-Based Hospital Nurse Staffing: The Challenges](#)

[RN Staffing Time and Outcomes of Long-Stay Nursing Home Residents: Pressure Ulcers and other Adverse Outcomes are Less Likely as RNs Spend More Time on Direct Patient Care](#)

[Nursing Home Regulations: RNs in Long Term Care Research Summary](#)

[Long-Term Care Staffing Study](#)

[Transforming Long-Term Care to Keep Residents Healthy and Safe](#)

[Staffing Standards for Nova Scotia Nursing Homes](#)

## References

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