

Calling all RPNs



Real

Professional

Nurses

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The importance of an updated job description

A lot of people consider job descriptions to be a tool of management. While they are helpful to employers when recruiting, defining organizational structure, and performing job appraisals, they are just as beneficial to the employee.

A well-defined job description outlines the importance of your profession. It defines basic roles, responsibilities, and essential job functions. It is used to set boundaries and expectations for both management and the employee, resulting in a performance review that is clear and accurate, relies on data, and removes personal feelings, while enhancing your collective agreement protections.

When I set out to update the Registered Practical Nurse job description at my workplace, it had not been updated since 1972. It required a complete overhaul, as our profession had changed dramatically over three decades.

Aside from the usual content found in most other RPN job descriptions, I was able to include language on in-charge duty and training newly-hired and/or newly-graduated Registered Nurses. We all do it, but our employers sometimes have a real problem acknowledging this.

A new, revised description will be an effective tool for your bargaining team in the next round of negotiations.

Ask your human resources department for a copy of your job description. If it is outdated, or does not encompass the functions and responsibilities that you currently perform in your organization, consider meeting with the employer to create a new one.

-Craig Nesbitt, Local 636



Craig Nesbitt, RPNAO Deputy Executive Director Beth McCracken, Pam Oelke, Jill McIlwraith at the RPNAO Lobby at Queen's Park

What is an RPN?

During the lobbying session at Queens Park, we were asked repeatedly, "What is an RPN?" Many MPPs said they would not know the difference between an RN and RPN in a health care setting.

We often hear - "Nursing ...One profession...Many Partnerships", and "RNs and RPNs – Working Together." There are many articles written by both the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), and the Registered Practical Nurses of Ontario (RPNAO) that express the scope of practice for each group, as well provide a guideline for employers to evaluate how best to utilize RPNs in their organization.

In 1938, due to a shortage of nurses and an increasing need for bedside care, educational centres opened to train the first Practical Nurses. By 1947 they were a "certified" group. In 1963, the CNO established the

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Registered Nursing Assistant, or RNA. Even then it was identified that RNAs were underutilized. Change, growth and education continued, and by 1993 the title was changed to Registered Practical Nurse (RPN).

As the century ended and the new millennium started, very little changed for the RPNs in Ontario workplaces. Education increased at the college level. A Code of Ethics was established. RPNs were taught they had a “responsibility to provide the highest standards of professional practice.” New college graduates were told they were valued members of the health care team. Many continue to upgrade their skills to meet the ever-growing need for RPNs in community and rural settings.

But since the first Practical Nurse started his or her practice a common thread was evident. Practical Nurses were needed because of a nursing shortage in the province. Throughout the decades this fact has emerged many times. Now, 67 years later, the shortage remains.

Health care is changing. Education is increasing. So what is an RPN in this new millennium? As quoted in an RPNAO article, “RPNs are health care professionals. They combine nursing skills, knowledge and judgment with a caring attitude and personal touch. They provide, assist and educate clients with their activities of daily living which include nutrition, elimination, medication, safety, ambulation, and hygiene.”

There are more than 33,000 RPNs in Ontario. We are an average age of 47. We are governed by a scope of practice, and it is recognized that nursing is one profession with two categories.

It is time to let our employers, members of government and the public know that we are able to adapt with the ever-increasing changes to the health care system. We work in all fields of care within the province. We ask only that we be given the recognition that RPNs are a very valuable member of the health care team, with many skills to offer.

-Pam Oelke, Local 152

Scope of Practice Survey Results

We had an amazing return on the survey about scope of practice. Thanks to those of you who took the time to fill it in. It has given us very good information.

A copy of the survey results will be sent to all locals with RPNs. The survey results will also be put on the RPN web page.

Bargaining Issues

Watch for a package of materials you will find useful during demand setting for your next round of bargaining. This package will be sent to all presidents/highest ranking of locals with RPNs. It will also be sent to each staff representative with RPN members.

The package will include background information and recommendations with respect to key issues for RPNs, including wages, professional responsibility language, language on utilization of skills, sample job descriptions, and model special case language.

Calling all RPNs!

We are looking for RPN contacts from each local, so we can build a network throughout the province.

Please contact the RPN working group with the name of the RPN contact in your local.

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