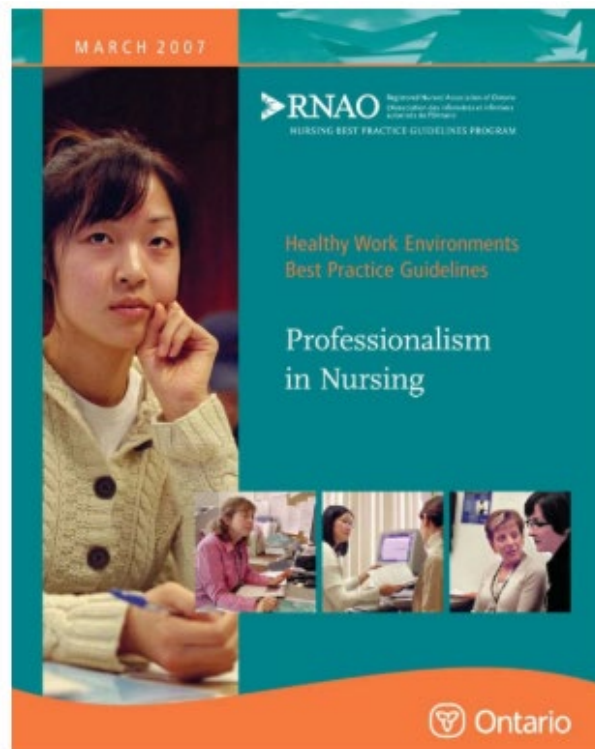


Gap (opportunity) analysis worksheet: Comparing your practices to best practices

Professionalism in Nursing March 2007



Download this guideline for free at: [Professionalism in Nursing | RNAO.ca](https://www.rnao.ca/professionalism-in-nursing)

Review RNAO's evidence-based implementation resource, Leading Change Toolkit, Fourth edition, at [RNAO.ca/leading-change-toolkit](https://www.rnao.ca/leading-change-toolkit)

What is a gap (opportunity) analysis?

This is a process widely used to determine if best practices have been met after the practice change has been completed. A gap (opportunity) analysis helps you compare your organization's current practice with evidence-based best practice recommendations and/or good practice statements to determine:

- Existing practices and processes that are currently implemented and supported by best practices. This information is useful to reinforce practice strengths.
- Recommendations/good practice statements that are currently partially implemented in practice. These would be good first targets for change efforts.
- Recommendations/good practice statements that are not currently being met.
- Recommendations/good practice statements that are not applicable to your practice setting.

Why should we conduct a gap (opportunity) analysis?

- Contributes to annual evaluation by allowing you to compare practice from year to year and choose which areas to focus on changing within the year.
- Focuses on needed practice change which prevents a total overhaul of practice and builds on established practices and processes.
- Informs next steps such as development of infrastructure to support implementation, internal/external partner engagement, identification of barriers and facilitators, resource requirements, selection of implementation strategies and evaluation approaches.
- Leads to sustained practice change by informing plans related to process, staff and organization and reinforces current evidence-based practices.

How can we get started conducting a gap (opportunity) analysis?

Review the best practice guideline (BPG) in its entirety including its purpose, scope, guiding frameworks, good practice statements and evidence. This will help you gain a full understanding of the actionable best practices, implementation strategies and resources available to you.

If you are new to reading evidence-based guidelines, please [watch our 2024 video](#) "How to read, use and interpret a best practice guideline".

Engage the team and internal and external partners as needed in gathering information for the gap (opportunity) analysis. Collect information on:

- Current practice – is it known and is it consistent? (met, unmet, partially met)
 - Partially met recommendations/good practice statements may only be implemented in some parts of the organization, or you may feel it is only half done.
- Are there some recommendations/good practice statements that must be implemented before others?
- Can any recommendations/good practice statements be implemented quickly? (TIP: These are, “easy wins” and build confidence in the change.)
- Are there recommendations based on higher levels of evidence than others?
- Are there any barriers to implementation? (Examples include: staffing, skill mix, budget, workload issues, etc.)
- What are the time frames in relation to specific actions and people or departments who can support the change effort?
- Are there links with other practices and programs in your organization?
- Are there existing resources and education that your organization can access?
- Are there any must-do recommendations/good practice statements crucial to client/resident/patient and staff safety?
- What alignment do we consider with legislation, policy, accreditation, etc.?

Important note for long-term care homes: Completing this gap (opportunity) analysis each year helps you compare your current practices with evidence-based standards set by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as required by the [Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021](#) and [Ontario Regulation 246/22](#).

Next steps

1. Celebrate the recommendations/good practice statements you are meeting.
2. Prioritize the areas you want to work on. Start with practice changes that can be made easily or are crucial to client/resident/patient and staff safety. Start by reinforcing success and focusing on quick wins.

3. These priority areas become the foundation for planning your program or implementing practice change.
4. For more information on taking your gap (opportunity) analysis to the next level, see the RNAO [Leading Change Toolkit, Fourth edition](#)
5. **For long-term care homes:** Contact your LTC implementation coach, – by visiting [Find your implementation coach | RNAO.ca](#) for assistance with completing a gap (opportunity) analysis.
6. **For all other BPSOs:** Contact your implementation coach.
7. Not a LTCH or a BPSO and have questions about using this worksheet-[Send us a message | RNAO.ca](#)

For more information about the interpretation of evidence and recommendation statements, please see RNAO's explainer, [Advancements in RNAO Best Practice Guideline Methodology: Transition to the GRADE Approach](#).

Gap (opportunity) analysis worksheet

Site: _____

Date completed: _____

Team members participating in the gap (opportunity) analysis:

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |

RNAO guideline Professionalism in Nursing	Met, partially met or unmet?	Notes (Examples of what to include: is this a priority to our organization, information on current practice, possible overlap with other programs or partners)
Knowledge Recommendation 1.0		
1.1 A body of knowledge that is theoretical, practical and clinical.		
1.2 Being able to apply that knowledge.		
1.2 Using theoretical and/or evidence-based rationale for practice.		
1.3 Synthesizing information from a variety of sources.		
1.5 Using information or evidence from nursing and other disciplines to inform practice.		
1.6 Sharing or communicating knowledge with colleagues, clients, family and others to continually improve care and health outcomes.		
Spirit of inquiry Recommendation 2.0		
2.1 Being open-minded and having the desire to explore new knowledge.		
2.2 Asking questions leading to the generation of knowledge and refinement of existing knowledge.		
2.3 Striving to define patterns of responses from clients, stakeholders and their context.		
2.4 Being committed to life-long learning.		
Accountability Recommendation 3.0		
3.1 Understanding the meaning of self-regulation and its implications for practice.		
3.2 Using legislation, standards of practice and a code of ethics to clarify one's scope of practice.		
3.3 Being committed to work with clients and families to achieve desired outcomes.		

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3.4 Being actively engaged in advancing the quality of care.		
3.5 Recognizing personal capabilities, knowledge base and areas for development.		
Autonomy Recommendation 4.0		
4.1 Working independently and exercising decision-making within one's appropriate scope of practice.		
4.2 Recognizing relational autonomy and the effects of the context and relationships on this autonomy.		
4.3 Becoming aware of barriers and constraints that may interfere with one's autonomy and seeking ways to remedy the situation.		
Advocacy Recommendation 5.0		
5.1 Understanding the client's perspective.		
5.2 Assisting the client with their learning needs.		
5.3 Being involved in professional practice initiatives and activities to enhance health care.		
5.4 Being knowledgeable about policies that impact on delivery of health care.		
Innovation and visionary Recommendation 6.0		
6.1 Fostering a culture of innovation to enhance client/family outcomes.		
6.2 Showing initiative for new ideas and being involved through taking action.		
6.3 Influencing the future of nursing, delivery of health care and the health care system.		
Collegiality and collaboration Recommendation 7.0		
7.1 Developing collaborative partnerships within a professional context.		
7.2 Acting as a mentor to nurses, nursing students and colleagues to enhance and support professional growth.		
7.3 Acknowledging and recognizing interdependence between care providers		
Ethics and values Recommendation 8.0		
8.1 Knowledgeable about ethical values, concepts and decision-making.		
8.2 Being able to identify ethical concerns, issues and dilemmas.		
8.3 Applying knowledge of nursing ethics to make decisions and to act on decisions.		

RNAO guideline Professionalism in Nursing	Met, partially met or unmet?	Notes (Examples of what to include: is this a priority to our organization, information on current practice, possible overlap with other programs or partners)
8.4 Being able to collect and use information from various sources for ethical decision making.		
8.5 Collaborating with colleagues to develop and maintain a practice environment that supports nurses and respects their ethical and professional responsibilities.		
8.6 Engaging in critical thinking about ethical issues in clinical and professional practice.		