

# Standardizing Nursing Rehabilitation Competencies at Trillium Health Partners (THP)

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## Introduction

- Rehabilitation is defined as set of interventions designed to optimize function and reduce disability (World Health Organization, 2024).
- Every nursing specialty requires nurses to possess unique set of competencies and skills to practice competently.
- As per the Nursing Act 1991, every healthcare member must be adequately trained to perform effectively (Ontario, 2025).
- The previous orientation checklist lacked Rehabilitation-specific competencies. This gap led to the development of a new, standardized orientation checklist tailored to the unique needs of rehabilitation nursing to standardize nursing care.

## Aim

The project aims to review essential nursing competencies and skills required for nurses working in rehabilitation units and develop a competency-based checklist for preceptors and preceptee to address the learning needs of the newly hired nurses.

Four objectives were developed to achieve the desired goal of the project.

- Analyze the existing THP rehabilitation nursing competency checklist and compare with the professional organization's outlined competencies to ensure alignment with best practice.
- Examine rehabilitative nursing competencies by exploring provincial competency frameworks.
- Develop a rehabilitative nursing competency and skills checklist for effective and efficient transition to practice.
- Implement and evaluate the checklist to assess its effectiveness.

## Methods

The project was grounded in Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Malcolm Knowles ideology of adult learning theory (Billings & Halstead, 2020).

- The project team gathered evidence-based practice standards from the following sources:
  - Provincial rehabilitative care standards and competencies
  - Rehabilitative Care Alliance (RCA)
  - Provincial Geriatrics Leadership Ontario (PGLO)
  - Association of Rehabilitative Nurses
  - Consultation from the 5C unit manager and clinical educator
- A literature review was conducted using Walden University library database and Google Scholar between years 2020-2025 using following keywords "new graduate orientation", "transition to practice", "unit specific orientation".
- To evaluate learners' competence with specific skills/competencies, a Likert scale in combination with Benner's stages of clinical competence was utilized (Benner, 1984) along with space for preceptor's feedback.

Rehabilitation Nursing Competency Checklist						
Nursing Competency	Nursing Skills	Novice	Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
I have the knowledge and ability to provide care to patient within Rehab Patient Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culturally sensitive care</li> <li>Communication with patient/caregivers as part of circle of care and pain relief in TCM to colleagues.</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5
I have the knowledge of interprofessional team and approach to care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiar with the role each EP member (i.e. physiotherapy, occupational therapist, OT, CPT, respiratory, social work, speech, pharmacist, dietitian, physician, patient care assistant (PCA), nurse clerk etc.)</li> <li>Understand rehab model of care including allied PGs</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5
I have working knowledge of inter professional (IP) rounds and the writing code in rounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Quick Six rounds scripting tool.</li> <li>Understand how to report during rounds using the Quick Six tool.</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5

Rehabilitative Care Interventions	Skills
Mobility/Falls prevention Equipment in the unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer, hoist/lifts, ceiling lifts, pivot disc, transfer board, stairs study</li> <li>Declutter room, secure tubework, bed in lowest position</li> </ul>
Wound care and preventative wound care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand management of pressure injuries and prevention strategies</li> <li>VAC dressing</li> <li>Staple and suture removal</li> </ul>
Lines/Drains/Access Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IV Pumps, IV initiation &amp; management</li> <li>Central Venous Catheter care and management (PICCs, Hickman, Hemodialysis catheters)</li> <li>Blood draws for CVADs</li> <li>Chronic chest tubes/pneumal catheters (i.e. PleurX)</li> <li>Surgical/peritoneal drains</li> </ul>
THP Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oxygen titration, potassium, bowel care, hypoglycemia, urinary retention, indwelling catheter, correction-dose insulin, CVAD, acetone replacement protocols</li> </ul>
IPAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dressing/doffing of PPE</li> <li>AGMP procedures</li> <li>Hazardous drug handling</li> <li>Specimen handling</li> </ul>
Continence management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catheterization (male/female), Bladder scan</li> <li>Ostomy/ileostomy management/Nephrostomy tubes</li> </ul>
Medication management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand Pyxis machine</li> <li>Oral, IV, subcutaneous, sublingual, topical, rights of medications, allergy assessment</li> <li>Medication calculations</li> <li>Resources on THP HUB, Up-to-Date, Lexi-Comp</li> <li>Medication reconciliation and preparation</li> </ul>
Diet/nutrition/hydration management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kangaroo OMNI pump</li> <li>Blood transfusion management protocols</li> <li>Oral care/oral feeds</li> <li>Fluid balance monitoring</li> <li>Blood glucose monitoring</li> </ul>
Case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admit and discharge patient from beginning to end in Epic</li> <li>Review Code Blue procedure</li> <li>Understand code status and advance care planning documentation</li> <li>Care After Death Policy and Procedure &amp; TGLN</li> <li>Process for coroner's case</li> </ul>

Rehabilitation Nursing Competency Checklist

Nursing Competency	Nursing Skills	Novice	Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
Demonstrate effective communication with interprofessional team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation during weekly rounds</li> <li>Use of AIDEI, patient whiteboards</li> <li>Understand physical one-call model and different modes of communication (i.e. paging, secure chat etc.)</li> <li>Utilize SBAR appropriately (i.e. physician communication)</li> <li>Understand process for taking a telephone order</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of Functional Independence Measure (FIM) tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands how FIM integrates into rehabilitation nursing</li> <li>Complete FIM certification</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5
Documentation in Epic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Epic orientation checklist - have an understanding of nursing documentation standards as per THP and CNO</li> <li>Understand how to write narrative notes (define focus, significance, progress)</li> </ul>	1	2	3	4	5

Rehabilitation Nursing Competency Checklist continued



## Methods (Continued)

- A feedback survey to evaluate effectiveness of the checklist was developed to gain preceptor insight regarding usability and applicability of the tool at 3-week interval and learner feedback at 6-week interval to determine their competence level.

Nursing Competency	Nursing Skills	Novice	Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
		Have not experience	Limited experience	Understands actions and concepts	Understands concepts & links theory to practice	Initiative group of situation, prioritization, & models practice standard
*Always know the patient's baseline prior to admission and the rehab goals they must meet to return to their baseline or their new baseline*	Mobility – understand their mobility status admission to unit, check allied mobility assessment to safely mobilize patients; Understand falls, risk interventions, ambulation status, post-fall protocol documentation	1	2	3	4	5
	ADLs – functional level for dressing, toileting, bathing, feeding	1	2	3	4	5
	ADLs – medication management, finance management, house chores etc.	1	2	3	4	5
	Cognition/Mental Health – assess responsive behaviors, complete daily assessments (i.e. Confusion Assessment Method)	1	2	3	4	5
I can provide variety of interventions to assist client/family with physical, cognitive, and perceptual deficits	Skin & Wound Assessment – understand and be able to implement pressure injury prevention strategies (i.e. Braden scale, assessing need for NSWOC consult, air bed use, Privaline boots, RSDU washers), DVT Prophylaxis (i.e. subglip application, SCD use)	1	2	3	4	5
	Comments:					

RCA Domains of Care

Nursing Competency	Nursing Skills	Novice	Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
		Have not experience	Limited experience	Understands actions and concepts	Understands concepts & links theory to practice	Initiative group of situation, prioritization, & models practice standard
I can provide variety of interventions to assist client/family with physical, cognitive, and perceptual deficits	Nutrition – understand how to complete CNST. Understand where to document thal/oral intake, monitoring for risk for dehydration, feeding status and who to escalate to, if concerned re. nutritional status	1	2	3	4	5
	Continence – understand baseline and strategies to manage their functional goal, conduct pain assessment using pain scale as needed, utilize pharmacological or non-pharmacological interventions	1	2	3	4	5
I can provide variety of interventions to assist client/family with physical, cognitive, and perceptual deficits	Pain – barrier to reaching their functional goal, conduct pain assessment using pain scale as needed, utilize pharmacological or non-pharmacological interventions	1	2	3	4	5
	Comments:					

RCA Domains of Care

Rehabilitation Nursing Competency Checklist continued

## Preceptor/Learner Feedback Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Preceptor  Learner  3-week  6-week

- Was the nurse-competency orientation checklist relevant to the Rehab program?
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
 Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
- Was the checklist effective in introducing to your role and responsibilities?
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
 Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
- Did you feel that the orientation was the right length?
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
 Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the orientation program?
  - Satisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Neutral
 Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anything you feel was missing from the checklist? Any suggestions for improvement?
 

\_\_\_\_\_

Rehabilitation Nursing Competency Checklist Feedback Survey

## Results

The rehabilitative nursing competencies and skills checklist was developed to ensure standardization of nursing orientation of all new nursing staff in rehabilitative care settings.

- The checklist was utilized with **8** newly hired nurses (2) on 5C and (6) at UHN-RCC between June 2025 to present.

The feedback received since implementation of the checklist from newly hired nurses and educators include:

- Newly hired nurses report feeling more prepared.
- Provided opportunity for nurses to perform a self-assessment and identify learning goals.
- Educator touchpoints throughout the orientation are now targeted to address the identified learning goals.
- Lambson et al. (2023) suggest that unit-specific orientation programs enhance preceptorship and support from leadership fosters a positive learning environment which ultimately improves nurse retention rates.

## Conclusion

Nursing is a demanding profession that requires both clinicians and healthcare organizations to ensure that all team members possess knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment necessary to carry out their responsibilities in a professional and effective manner. The nurse-based competency checklist will continue to be used for onboarding newly hired nurses in the rehabilitative unit to standardize nursing skills and competencies. Its effectiveness will be evaluated using the Kirkpatrick Model, assessing learner experience, knowledge and skill acquisition, application in clinical practice, as well as outcomes related to care quality and staff retention.

For more information:

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## References

