



Oct. 29, 2022

Ms. Silvie Crawford
Executive Director and CEO
College of Nurses of Ontario
101 Davenport Rd.
Toronto, Ont. M5R 3P1

Dear Silvie,

RE: Standards of practice for nurse psychotherapy

Mental health services and supports are paramount at this time as many people continue to struggle to engage in day-to-day healthy functioning while living with lingering COVID-related issues and impacts. RNAO and nurse psychotherapists across Ontario are relieved that the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) authorized nurses to independently provide the controlled act of psychotherapy in 2020, following extensive advocacy by RNAO. Access to mental health care and support has greatly increased because RPNs, RNs, and NPs, continue to provide psychotherapy across all sectors and in urban, rural and remote settings.

Nurses are proud to be one of the six regulated health professions providing this important intervention to Ontarians. However, the CNO – unlike the other five colleges overseeing the provision of psychotherapy in our province – does not provide standards of practice for nurse psychotherapy to ensure adequate protection of the public. This remains the case despite repeated requests by RNAO and by nurse psychotherapists themselves.

RNAO and the Nurse Psychotherapy Association of Ontario once again ask the CNO to develop a set of practice standards for the controlled act of nurse psychotherapy. Clear and comprehensive practice standards in this area are needed to inform nurse psychotherapy practice, clarify public expectations and support the CNO's mandate of public protection.

To support this task, we attach a comprehensive set of guides to establish parameters for nurse psychotherapists, developed by members of our associations. We recommend the CNO use these guides. Alternatively, we are prepared to work with you to formalize a more extensive set of standards to define this specialty area of nursing practice.

We invite you to meet with representatives from RNAO and the Nurse Psychotherapy Association of Ontario to advance nurse psychotherapy in Ontario as a competency-driven controlled act.



RNAO's Shannon Holcomb from the office of Doris Grinspun will be in touch with you to arrange a meeting in November 2022. We look forward to working with you to plan a way forward.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doris Grinspun". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doris Grinspun, RN,MSN, PhD,
LLD(hon), Dr(hc), FAAN, FCAN, O.ONT
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Bell". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a small dot above the letter 'i' in "Siobhan".

Siobhan Bell, RN, BScN (hons), MN, DNP (c)
Nurse Psychotherapist
President, Nurse Psychotherapy Association of Ontario

Copy to: Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister of Health
Dr. Karima Velji, Chief of Nursing and Professional Practice and Assistant Deputy
Minister of Ontario
CNO Council, c/o Council President Naomi Thick, RN
RNAO board of directors
Executive board, Nurse Psychotherapy Association of Ontario

Psychotherapy practice of the Nurse Psychotherapist

The controlled act of psychotherapy has been proclaimed under the Regulated Health Professions Act. As of 2019, there are six regulatory bodies whose members are authorized to provide the controlled act of psychotherapy in Ontario, including the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).

In community and private settings, Nurse Psychotherapists can independently perform the controlled act of psychotherapy.

Required training

1. Nurse Psychotherapists must have training in psychotherapy.
2. The training Nurse Psychotherapists engage in includes both academic training and clinical supervision.
3. Training programs include receiving training and mentorship from an experienced clinician who has received formal training and supervision themselves from one of the 6 colleges enabled by their regulatory bodies to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy and should include clinical supervision.

Practice of the Nurse Psychotherapist

1. Nurse Psychotherapists are aware that initiation of psychotherapy interventions may range from a crisis or informal supportive psychotherapy approach to a formal psychotherapy situation with a longer engagement period and more structured interventions.
 - i. Refer to Psychotherapy Act (e-Laws Ontario, 2007 – <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/07p10>)
 - ii. Refer to [*Establishing therapeutic relationships*](#) (RNAO, 2002, 2006)
2. Nurse Psychotherapists obtain and maintain the necessary knowledge, skills, judgment and ability to initiate psychotherapy safely, effectively and ethically.
3. Nurse Psychotherapists are accountable for determining whether their clients' condition warrants the use and type of psychotherapy and for assessing the clinical results/outcomes of the intervention.
4. Nurse Psychotherapists make decisions about the initial and continued practice of psychotherapy based on client preferences, cultural appropriateness and consent per CNO standards.

5. Clinical decisions will also be based on:
 - i. the client's clinical status
 - ii. the Nurse Psychotherapist's clinical expertise
 - iii. the evidence of the appropriateness and efficacy of the preferred model of psychotherapy for the needs of that client
6. Nurse Psychotherapists are responsible for recognizing, minimizing and managing the risks of performing psychotherapy and for sharing this information with clients as necessary.
7. Nurse Psychotherapists will document the provision of psychotherapy as per the CNO and any applicable organizational standards.
8. Nurse Psychotherapists will be accountable for determining that the clients' condition warrants the use of psychotherapy, for selecting an appropriate model of intervention and for the appropriate performance of intervention.
9. When Nurse Psychotherapists are documenting any notes for their psychotherapy practice, they provide their full names as recorded on the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)'s Register (Find A Nurse), their protected titles (RPN, RN, NP) and the title "psychotherapist."

Nurse Psychotherapists use evidence-based modalities in their practice. Listed below are some examples of modalities:

- i. Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- ii. Dialectical-Behavioural Therapy (DBT)
- iii. Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- iv. Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- v. Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy
- vi. Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET)
- vii. Psychodynamic psychotherapy

Education, training and professional development

1. Nurse Psychotherapists have incorporated their education and training on psychotherapy interventions including the initiation and continued practice of psychotherapy, in a systematic manner to promote core competencies in psychotherapy practice and to support evidence-based training, supervision and practice in psychotherapy.

2. Nurse Psychotherapists maintain ongoing competencies by engaging in regular and consistent learning activities through formal/informal supervision and continued educational initiatives. Self-knowledge and Therapeutic use of Self is fundamental to the ongoing learning process of nurses to engage in safe and effective psychotherapy interventions.
3. Nurse Psychotherapists have acquired a combination of activities such as formal and informal educational courses, on the job training and supervised experience.
4. Nurse Psychotherapists practice reflectively to enhance their awareness of their current and evolving attitudes, perceptions and biases, and values and beliefs when engaging in psychotherapy interventions.

System, organization and policy recommendations

1. Nurse Psychotherapists advocate with policy makers for improved access to psychotherapy and treatment modalities, as part of a holistic, primary health care for all populations.
2. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who provide mechanisms of support for nurses through orientation programs and ongoing professional development opportunities including training and supervision regarding psychotherapy interventions.
3. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who use knowledge translation processes and multi-faceted strategies including interdisciplinary approaches to integrate best practices in the initiation and continued practice of psychotherapy across all practice settings.
4. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who develop policies and structure related to supervision to support staff in consultations and continued learning and professional growth.
5. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who allocate resources to ensure that all nurses have opportunities for clinical supervision and coaching on an ongoing basis.
6. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who implement policies regarding the systematic documentation of psychotherapeutic interventions.
7. Nurse Psychotherapists seek employers who support research initiatives related to psychotherapy.

Relevant policies

Nurse Psychotherapists are familiar with, and use, the policies of the following organizations:

1. Nurse Psychotherapy Standards of Practice (2022) <https://www.nursepsychotherapy.org/professional-practice>
2. The Standards and Guidelines of the College of Nurses of Ontario, as available online at: <https://www.cno.org/en/learn-about-standards-guidelines/standards-and-guidelines/>
3. The Nursing Best Practice Guidelines of the RNAO, as available online at: <https://rnao.ca/bpg>
4. The Canadian Standards of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, as published by the Canadian Federation of Mental Health Nurses and which is available online at: <https://www.cfmhn.ca/professional-practice/>

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