

# Use of Title Standards

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## Use of Title Standards

The *Health Professions Act* (HPA) (2000) provides a regulatory framework whereby schedules authorize the titles, abbreviations, and initials that members of a regulated profession can use. The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* (2005) further specifies the use of those titles, abbreviations, and initials for the registered nursing profession.

Title protection assures the public that an individual:

- has met the regulatory college's requirements for registration; and
- is authorized to practise nursing.

Protected titles create a boundary for professional practice. Titles are reserved for members of the regulated profession and cannot legally be used by unqualified and unregulated individuals. When people fraudulently pass themselves off as regulated professionals, it presents a risk to public safety and protection (Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence, 2010).

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify the titles, abbreviations, and initials **REGULATED MEMBERS**<sup>1</sup> may use, and to establish the expectations for their use. This includes the use of the title **SPECIALIST**.

The HPA, Part 7 s.128 (Appendix A), provides the regulatory structure for the use of protected titles and abbreviations. This section of the HPA outlines the prohibition and the exception to the use of protected titles including college, registered, regulated, doctor, surgeon, pathologist, oncologist, nurse, and specialist. Unauthorized use of protected titles and abbreviations can result in fines and other penalties as outlined in this section of the HPA.

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<sup>1</sup> Words or phrases in **BOLD CAPITALS** upon first mention are defined in the glossary.

# Titles, Abbreviations, and Initials That Can Be Used by Regulated Members

The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* (section 14) identifies the titles, abbreviations, and initials that can be used by regulated members of CARNA. They are as follows:

- 14(1)** A regulated members registered on the registered nurse register may use the title "registered nurse" and the initials "RN".
- (2)** A regulated member registered on the **CERTIFIED GRADUATE NURSE** register may use the title "certified graduate nurse" and the initials "CGN".
- (4)** A regulated member registered on the nurse practitioner register may use the title "nurse practitioner" and the initials "NP".
- (5)** A regulated member registered on the registered nurse register or the nurse practitioner register may in accordance with the standards of practice use the title "specialist" in connection with providing professional services.
- (6)** A regulated member registered on the provisional register as a graduate nurse on the registered nurse register may use the title "**GRADUATE NURSE**" and the initials "GN".
- (7)** A regulated member registered on the provisional register as a graduate nurse practitioner on the nurse practitioner register may use the title "**GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONER**" and the initials "GNP".
- (8)** A regulated member registered on the courtesy register as a registered nurse may use the title "registered nurse" and the initials "RN".
- (9)** A regulated member registered on the courtesy register as a nurse practitioner may use the title "nurse practitioner" and the initials "NP".

The standards identify the expectations for using protected titles, abbreviations, and initials by regulated members. The criteria illustrate how each **STANDARD** must be met. All criteria must be met in order to achieve the standard and are not written in order of importance.

## Standard 1: Use of Title

Regulated members must use the title, abbreviation, or initials that are consistent with the category on the register in which they are registered.

### Criteria

The regulated member must:

- 1.1** have a practice permit to use a protected title;
- 1.2** not use a title, abbreviation, or initials alone or in combination with other words in a manner that states or implies that they are registered in a category on the register unless they are registered in that category;
- 1.3** include their title, abbreviation, or initials in all documentation;
- 1.4** only use the title, abbreviation, or initials consistent with the category on the register in which they are registered, when engaged in a practice recognized as the practice of nursing; and
- 1.5** not use a title, abbreviation, or initials in association with the **ENDORSEMENT** or promotion of products or services outside of their practice.

### Use of the Title Specialist

The regulated member authorized to use the title 'specialist', is an individual who has a high level of expertise in a clinical specialty and meets the standard. The focus of clinical specialty practice may be related to:

- population (e.g., maternal/child, seniors);
- type of health problem (e.g., pain management, bereavement);
- disease or subspecialty (e.g., diabetes, orthopedics, cardiology);
- a practice setting (e.g., emergency department, home care, occupational health); or
- type of care (e.g., wound care, critical care, palliative care, etc.).

(Adapted from CNA, 2014)

## Standard 2: Use of Title Specialist

regulated members must meet the requirements to use the title 'specialist'.

### Criteria

The regulated member must:

- 2.1** have a practice permit;
- 2.2** have three or more years of full-time experience in the specific clinical practice area where they currently practise, to use the title 'specialist';
- 2.3** have a graduate degree applicable to the specific clinical practice area where they use their expertise to provide **PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**; and
- 2.4** not use the title 'specialist' alone or in combination with other words in a manner that states or implies they are a specialist if they do not meet the requirements to use the title.

## Glossary

**CERTIFIED GRADUATE NURSE** – Prior to 1983 this individual was a regulated member who met all the requirements for registration except for the registration exam, as the legislation in effect at the time did not require them to pass a registration exam. When the *Nursing Profession Act* was proclaimed in 1983, a certified graduate nurse was grandfathered on the register. This category continues to exist in the *Health Professions Act*; however; no new Alberta nurse can be added to this category.

**ENDORSEMENT** – Occurs when a nurse uses their credentials to lend credibility to a commercial product or service.

**GRADUATE NURSE** – A regulated member on the provisional register who is in the process of meeting CARNA registered nurse registration requirements.

**GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONER** – A regulated member on the provisional register who is in the process of meeting CARNA nurse practitioner registration requirements. These individuals may be graduates from an approved nurse practitioner program leading to initial nurse practitioner registration, or internationally educated nurse practitioners.

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE** – A service that comes within the practice of a regulated profession (HPA, 2000).

**REGULATED MEMBERS** – CARNA regulated members include: registered nurses, graduate nurses, certified graduate nurses, nurse practitioners, graduate nurse practitioners, and RN or NP courtesy regulated members.

**SPECIALIST** – An individual whose practice is focused in a particular clinical area and meets the standard approved by CARNA.

**STANDARD** – An authoritative statement that describes the required behaviour of every nurse to evaluate individual performance (CNA, 2010).

## References

Canadian Nurses Association. (2010). *Canadian nurse practitioner core competency framework*. Retrieved from [http://cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/files/en/competency\\_framework\\_2010\\_e.pdf](http://cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/files/en/competency_framework_2010_e.pdf).

Canadian Nurses Association. (2014). *Pan-Canadian core competencies for the clinical nurse specialist*. Ottawa ON: Author.

Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence. (2010). *Protecting the public from unregistered practitioners: Tackling misuse of protected title*. London, England: Author.

*Health Professions Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. H-7.

*Registered Nurses Profession Regulation*, Alta. Reg. 232/2005.

# Appendix A: Health Professions Act – Part 7

## Part 7

### Title Protection

#### Protected words, abbreviations

- 15(1)** A regulated member registered on any register may, within the practice of registered nursing, perform the following restricted activities:
- (a)** to cut a body tissue, to administer anything by an invasive procedure on body tissue or to perform surgical or other invasive procedures on body tissue below the dermis or the mucous membrane;
  - (b)** to insert or remove instruments, devices, fingers or hands
    - (i)** beyond the cartilaginous portion of the ear canal,
- 128(1)** No person or group of persons shall represent or imply that the person is a regulated member or that the group of persons consists of regulated members unless the person is a regulated member or the group of persons consists of regulated member.
- (2)** No person or group of persons shall use the name of a college, alone or in combination with other words, in a manner that states or implies that the person or group of persons is a college under this Act unless the person or group of persons is a college under this Act.
- (3)** No regulated member shall use the word “registered” in a manner that states or implies that the member is a regulated member of a regulated profession except in accordance with the regulations.

- (4)** No person or group of persons shall use the word “regulated” in connection with the name of a regulated profession or professional service or the words “regulated health professional” in a manner that states or implies that the person or group of persons is a college or a regulated member or group of regulated members unless the person or group of persons is a college under this Act or another enactment or is a regulated member or consists of a group of regulated members.
- (5)** No person other than
- (a)** a regulated member shall use a title, abbreviation or initials set out in section 2 of a schedule to this Act alone or in combination with other words in a manner that states or implies that the person is a regulated member of the college to which section 2 of the schedule refers, or
  - (b)** a student who is enrolled in a program that in the opinion of the registrar is a program to train persons to provide professional services shall use a title, abbreviation or initials set out in section 2 of a schedule to this Act in combination with the word “student” while undertaking activities related to the program.
- (5.1)** Despite subsections (1), (3), (5) and (10), a student described in subsection (5)(b) shall not use the title “regulated” or “registered” or the initial “R” in combination with the word “student” while undertaking activities related to a program described in subsection (5)(b).
- (6)** No corporation shall use the word college, alone or in combination with other words, in a manner that states or implies that the corporation is a college under this Act unless the corporation is a college under this Act or authorized to use the word college under another enactment.
- (7)** No person shall use the title “doctor”, “surgeon”, “pathologist” or “oncologist” or the abbreviation “Dr.” alone or in combination with other words in connection with providing a health service unless the person is authorized to use the title or abbreviation by this Act or another enactment.
- (8)** Subsection (7) does not apply to a person who uses the title “doctor”, “surgeon”, “pathologist” or “oncologist” or the abbreviation “Dr.” alone or in

combination with other words in connection with teaching, research or administration.

- (9)** No person shall use the word “nurse” alone or in combination with other words that in a manner states or implies that the person is a regulated member unless the person is authorized to use the word pursuant to Schedule 10, 24 or 25 or another enactment.
- (10)** No person or group of persons shall use the word “registered” or “regulated” or the phrase “regulated health professional” alone or in combination with other words that in a manner states or implies that the person is a regulated member unless the person or group of persons
- (a)** is a regulated member or consists of a group of regulated members, or
  - (b)** is a person or group of persons authorized to use the word “registered” or “regulated” or the phrase “regulated health professional” in connection with the health service by another enactment.
- (11)** No regulated member shall use the term “specialist” or hold himself or herself out to be a specialist in connection with providing a health service unless the regulated member is authorized to use the term “specialist” by a Schedule to this Act or by a regulation made under section 131 or by a bylaw made under section 132 or as otherwise authorized by a council.

### Penalty

- 129** A person who contravenes section 128 is guilty of an offence and liable
- (a)** or a first offence, to a fine of not more than \$2000,
  - (b)** for a 2nd offence, to a fine of not more than \$4000, and
  - (c)** for a 3rd and every subsequent offence, to a fine of not more than \$6000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months or to both fine and imprisonment.

1999 cH-5.5 s129

**Injunction**

- 130** The Court of Queen's Bench, on application by a college, may grant an injunction enjoining any person from doing any act that contravenes section 128, despite any penalty that may be provided by section 129 in respect of that contravention.

RSA 2000 cH-7 s130; 2009 c53 s79