

Advertising Standards

March 2021

Approved by the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) Council, March 2021.

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Purpose

An **ADVERTISEMENT**¹ can be a useful way to communicate the **HEALTH SERVICES** offered by a health-care professional so that the public can make informed choices. **REGISTRANTS** of CARNA practice with honesty and integrity, and do not misuse their status or power when advertising their health services.

The purpose of this document is to outline the expectations of registrants when advertising their nursing health services. These standards apply to registrants who are

- advertising their self-employed practice, or
- involved in advertising the nursing health services they offer.

The *Health Professions Act* (HPA) states the following:

*“A regulated member shall not engage in advertising that is untruthful, inaccurate or otherwise capable of **MISLEADING** or misinforming the public.”*

(Health Professions Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. H-7, s. 102)

Advertising that contains false and/or misleading content can compromise health-care choices, compromise trust, and harm the integrity of the profession. Misleading content may become the subject of complaints and disciplinary proceedings. Registrants must consider that any advertising of nursing health services limits or addresses perceived conflicts of interest.

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

Standards for Advertising

These standards identify the expectations for registrants for advertising. The criteria in the following standards illustrate how the registrant must meet the standard, and all criteria must be met in order to achieve the standard. The criteria are not written in order of importance.

Standard 1: Service to the Public

Registrants advertising nursing health services must ensure their advertisements are truthful, accurate and verifiable, and are in the best interests of the public.

Criteria

Registrant must

- 1.1 ensure their advertising is clear, truthful, factual, and accurate (*Canadian Code of Advertising Standards*, 2019) and does not mislead the public (HPA, 2000);
- 1.2 ensure that advertised health products and health services are **EVIDENCE-INFORMED**, verifiable, and accurately reflect the evidence readily available to the public (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, 2015);
- 1.3 ensure their advertising explicitly states all **PERTINENT INFORMATION** about the health service with disclaimers as prominent as other aspects of the message;
- 1.4 advertise with honesty and address any perceived conflicts of interest;
- 1.5 communicate reasonable expectations regarding prevention, treatment, or cure of a disease or disorder when advertising any drug, health product or service (*Food and Drugs Act*, 1985) (Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board, 2018);
- 1.6 encourage appropriate use of drugs, health products, or health services;
- 1.7 use illustrations, images, representations, or claims in advertising that are reasonable and appropriate;
- 1.8 not use power, position, or title to influence clients' decision-making;
- 1.9 not make unsubstantiated claims or reference to guarantees of the drug, health product, health services or results; and

1.10 not promote or **ENDORSE** a drug, cosmetic, device, or product.

Standard 2: Responsibility and Accountability

Registrants advertising nursing health services are responsible and accountable to ensure their advertisements are truthful, accurate, verifiable, and comply with relevant legislation and standards.

Criteria

Registrants must

- 2.1 protect the privacy and confidentiality as outlined in the *Privacy and Management of Health Information Standards (2020)* and *Health Information Act (2000)* of all **CLIENT** health information when advertising nursing health services;
- 2.2 when advertising health products, only advertise those that Health Canada authorizes for sale in Canada (Health Canada, 2015);
- 2.3 represent themselves clearly with respect to their full name, role and **PROTECTED TITLE**, abbreviation or initials, as outlined in the *Use of Title Standards (CARNA, 2019)*;
- 2.4 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 a register unless they are registered in that category (*Use of Title Standards, 2019*);
- 2.5 not discredit, disparage, or make comparative statements about other health-care providers, clinics, service fees, other treatments, or products in their advertising; and
- 2.6 not include the CARNA logo or any statement that refers or implies CARNA approval or support for the health service.

Glossary

ADVERTISEMENT – Any message, in any medium (spoken, written, images or social media), about a registrant and/or a clinic, group, product, or service with which a registrant is associated, the content of which is controlled directly or indirectly by a registrant (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, 2015).

CLIENT – Refers to patients, residents, families, groups, communities, and populations.

ENDORSE – When a registrant uses their credentials to lend credibility to a commercial product or service.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED – Practice based on successful strategies that improve client outcomes and are derived from a combination of various sources of evidence including client perspectives, research, national guidelines, policies, consensus statements, expert opinion, and quality improvement data.

HEALTH SERVICE – A service provided to people to protect, promote, or maintain their health; to prevent illness; to diagnose, treat or rehabilitate; or to take care of the health needs of the ill, disabled, injured or dying (*Health Professions Act, 2005*).

MISLEADING – Includes lying, misinforming, leading clients to a wrong conclusion, creating a false impression, leaving out (or hiding) important information, or making false or inaccurate claims.

PERTINENT INFORMATION – The information needed for clients to easily understand the health services being offered (including who would benefit from the health service and the risks), the cost, the name and title of the registrant offering the health services, and the contact information of the business.

PROTECTED TITLE – The titles, abbreviations, and initials used by registrants of CARNA according to the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation (2005)*.

REGISTRANT(S) – Includes registered nurses, graduate nurses, certified graduate nurses, nurse practitioners, graduate nurse practitioners, and RN or NP courtesy registrants on the CARNA registry.

References

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