



5 October 2009

Ms Karen Cook
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council
PO Box 873
DICKSON ACT 2602

Dear Karen

Re: ANMC Nurses and Midwives Guides to Professional Relationships

Thank you for your invitation to consider and offer feedback on the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council's (ANMC) Nurses and Midwives Guides to Professional Relationships.

The ANF's response to the two draft documents has been addressed using the feedback questionnaires provided by ANMC which accompany this letter.

Should you have any questions in relation to the feedback provided please contact Julianne Bryce, ANF Federal Senior Professional Officer on (03) 9602 8520 or via email at julianne@anf.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerardine", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Gerardine (Ged) Kearney
Federal Secretary

Encl.

The industrial and professional organisation for nurses and midwives in Australia

Canberra Office (Professional Services)

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ANF Journals

Australian Nursing Journal
Australian Journal of Advanced
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anj@anf.org.au
ajan@anf.org.au
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CONSULTATION ON:

A Nurse's Guide to Professional Relationships

A project of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Nursing Council of New Zealand

Feedback form

Instructions

The headings and questions on this form follow the structure of the document *A Nurse's Guide to Professional Relationships*. The intention of the form is to make it easier for you to provide us with feedback on the document. Whilst not specifically sought you are also welcome to make comments on the '*Background Paper: A Nurse's Guide to Professional Relationships*'. Your comments need not be confined to the space provided or to those questions included in the feedback form. Please complete a separate feedback form for each, if responding to both '*A Nurse's Guide to Professional Relationships*' and '*A Midwife's Guide to Professional Relationships*'

Electronic responses are preferred.

Please return this form by **Friday 25 September 2009 to:**

Rowena Robinson
Research and Policy Officer
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council
PO Box 873
Dickson ACT 2602
Email: robinson@anmc.org.au
Fax: 02 6257 7955

Your name:

Julianne Bryce
Senior Professional Officer

Organisation:

Australian Nursing Federation
National Office

Phone:

(03) 9602 8520
0409 221 699

Email contact:

julianne@anf.org.au

General comments

Do you have any comments about the document as a whole? Is the document accessible and easy to use? Would you use it? If so, how?

The ANF considers that the purpose of the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships is to educate nurses to ensure boundaries of practice are clearly understood and will be used by nurses to ensure adherence to safe, professional practice. This document is required to assist nurses to gain insight into what constitutes an appropriate professional relationship. The emphasis in the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships should be to assist nurses to remain within the therapeutic relationship rather than overemphasise boundary violations. The document should also refer nurses to local workplace / organisational policy.

In addition, it would be useful to the profession if the document is used to inform consumers of the acceptable boundaries of safe, professional practice for nurses. To this end a 'plain English' abridged version of the document could be made available to consumers.

Although the Background paper makes note of the current guidelines for nurses and midwives, the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships makes no reference to the existing documents developed by the State and Territory Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authority's (NMRA's). The listing of these current guideline documents should be included in the draft document. The Nurses and Midwives Board of New South Wales document is considered to be the most user friendly of the existing guidelines. It is plainly worded, clearly sets out what is good practice and can be used as an educational tool. The principles of safe practice are embedded in this document and useful stories/scenarios accompany the principles.

The ANF would prefer the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships to:

- Be a positive educational tool for nurses (in particular, students of nursing)
- Relate directly to the Codes of Professional Conduct and Ethics
- Clearly set out what is good practice rather than attempting to define unprofessional practice
- Advise nurses from whom / where to seek assistance when faced with difficult scenarios
- Clearly define the behavioural indicators of professional boundary crossing
- Be as simple and succinct as possible.

A. Introduction

Is the introduction to the guide comprehensive? Are there any extra matters that should have been included in the introduction? Is the relationship of the Guide to the Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Nurses clear? Do you have any further comments on the introduction?

The link between the Code of Professional Conduct and Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia and the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships needs to be strengthened as the existing Codes are the standards by which a nurse will be judged should there be an allegation of a breach in conduct or ethics. This document should either be a standard in its own right or be included as a supporting document to the Code of Professional Conduct. The content of the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships relates specifically to Conduct Statements 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9 in the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia.

B. What are Professional Boundaries?

Are the explanations of professional boundaries clear and meaningful to you? Could you use them to explain professional boundaries and their importance to colleagues? Do you have comments on any aspect of what constitutes professional boundaries?

The explanation of professional boundaries is clear. Rather than describing the 'fuzzy edges' of the 'zone of helpfulness' in the text explanation, it may be more appropriate to explain that boundary crossing can occur at either end of the section marked as the therapeutic relationship with under and over involvement as the two extremes of the continuum.

C. A Continuum of Professional Behaviour

Is the diagram useful to you? Does the diagram and accompanying text explain professional boundaries to you? Do you have comments on any aspect of the 'Continuum of Professional Behaviour'?

The diagram representing a continuum of professional behaviour (p4) may confuse rather than clarify the required behaviour of a nurse, in particular the 'zone of helpfulness'. This language should be simplified by using commonly understood terminology such as therapeutic relationship.

D. Professional Boundaries at the Over Involvement End of the Continuum

Is the presentation of these boxes and their content useful to you? Do they give you a clear sense of increasing professional boundary transgression along the continuum? Please add any other comments.

The two diagrams could be combined with boundary crossing occurring at either end of the therapeutic relationship. Sexual misconduct is one example of boundary violation and should not be included as a distinct box. More detail in relation to sexual misconduct as an example of an extreme form of boundary violation could be included in the Q&A – Professional Relationships section.

E. Some Guiding Principles for Safe, Professional Practice.

Do the principles have relevance in contemporary nursing practice? If not, what are alternatives? What does the word 'context' in the diagram mean to you? Please comment on any of the principles.

The principles of safe, professional practice are appropriate and relevant to contemporary nursing practice. For clarity, the principles should be listed horizontally under each of the subheadings. The diagram is too busy. The meaning of the word 'Context' in the diagram is unclear and could be removed. The concept of clinical supervision / discussion with colleagues could be included in the third dot point under care relationships.

F. Decision Making Tool – Professional Relationships

Is it clear that the 'Decision Making Tool' is related to the ANMC 'Decision Making Framework'? Please explain what the word 'context' in the diagram means to you? Would you find this diagram a useful tool in your practice? How could it be improved? Please add any other comments.

It is not clear that the diagram on p7 is related to the ANMC Decision Making Framework (DMF). A reference to the DMF could be included at the bottom of the diagram. The meaning of the word 'Context' in the diagram is unclear and could be removed. The format of the flowchart would be useful in practice and could be used as a wall chart. However, the questions for reflection may be confusing as they add another dimension to the decision making process. The flowchart should include clinical supervision / discussion with colleagues as a proposed behaviour or activity in the decision making process.

G. Q and A Professional Relationships

Are the lists of behaviours indicative of professional boundary violation similar to those that you perceive as evident in practice? Are there any others?

The behavioural indicators of potential boundary issues provided are good examples of boundary crossing/violation.

Is there sufficient information to support a nurse if s/he has concerns about a colleague possibly violating a professional boundary? What further information could be provided? Please add any other comments.

The implications of professional boundary violations needs to be strengthened as this would constitute a breach of the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia.

H. Do you have any additional comments about the Guide?

Gift registers would create an onerous workload for organisations and therefore are not reasonable. Organisational policy should reflect what is acceptable in line with the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia. The word 'midwives' rather than 'nurses' is used in the last paragraph on p9 pertaining to Gift Registers.

The document offers opposing statements in relation to the receipt of gifts in the guiding principles for safe, professional practice as only 'token gifts' and the suggestion of a gift register of a minimum value level on the last page of the document.

I. Do you have any comments about the Background Paper: A Nurse's Guide to Professional Relationships?

The Background Paper is excessively long. This document should build on the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships but not include a repetition of the same content. Diagram 2 – The boundary framework is confusing and should be removed. The stories/scenarios should give more information in relation to their application to the principles of safe, professional practice detailed in the Nurses Guide to Professional Relationships.

The acknowledgement of the complexity of boundary issues in small, rural, remote and Indigenous communities is supported.

Thank you for your time and contribution

CONSULTATION ON:

A Midwife's Guide to Professional Relationships

A project of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council

Feedback form

Instructions

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Email: robinson@anmc.org.au
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Your name:

Julianne Bryce
Senior Professional Officer

Organisation:

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Phone:

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Email contact:

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The ANF considers that the purpose of the Midwives Guide to Professional Relationships is to educate midwives to ensure boundaries of practice are clearly understood and will be used by midwives to ensure adherence to safe, professional practice. This document is required to assist midwives to gain insight into what constitutes an appropriate professional relationship. The emphasis in the Midwives Guide to Professional Relationships should be to assist midwives to remain within the therapeutic relationship rather than overemphasise boundary violations. The document should also refer midwives to local workplace / organisational policy.

In addition, it would be useful to the profession if the document is used to inform consumers of the acceptable boundaries of safe, professional practice for midwives. To this end a 'plain English' abridged version of the document could be made available to consumers.

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The ANF would prefer the Midwives Guide to Professional Relationships to:

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