Standards of Professional Performance for the Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist

Introduction

Standards of professional performance describe a competent level of behavior in the professional role, including activities related to quality of professional practice, facilitation of learning, collaboration, ethics, systems thinking, and use of resources, leadership, collegiality, and clinical inquiry. CNSs should be self-directed and purposeful in seeking the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance career goals. Membership in professional organizations, certification, continuing education, and advanced degrees are desirable methods of promoting professionalism.

**Standard 1 Professional Practice**

The acute care CNS develops criteria for and evaluates the quality, safety and effectiveness of practice within the 3 spheres of influence: the patient, nursing and nursing practice, and organizations and systems.

Performance Expectations:

- Leads clinical inquiry through quality improvement activities
- Obtains and maintains professional certification.
- Identifies and develops strategies to enhance quality care and promote healthy work environments
- Synthesizes data and formulates evidence-based recommendations to improve quality care, practice and healthcare outcomes within the three spheres
- Disseminates benefits of the CNS to the organization, system, and community through presentations, publications and/or involvement in professional organizations.
Standard 2 Individual Practice Evaluation

The acute care CNS is accountable for maintaining competence in clinical practice across all three spheres and has the professional responsibility to evaluate role performance according to professional practice standards, relevant statutes and regulations, and institutional guidelines.

Performance Expectations:

• Engages in self-reflection, performance appraisal and peer review to ensure competent professional practice.
• Complies with the credentialing and privileging process within the organization or system
Standard 3 Education

The acute care CNS is a lifelong learner who acquires and maintains current knowledge and competency in advanced nursing practice.

Performance Expectations:

• Accountable for self-engagement in educational activities related to professional practice and the population across the 3 spheres of influence
• Uses information gained in educational activities to improve professional performance
Standard 4 Collegiality

The acute care CNS promotes a healthy work environment for the professional development of peers, colleagues, and other professionals.

Performance Expectations:

- Contributes to the advancement of the profession as a whole by disseminating outcomes of practice through presentations and publications
- Promotes career development in students, nurses, and other healthcare providers
- Promotes the role and scope of practice of the CNS (e.g., to legislators, regulators, other health care providers, the public)
- Facilitates development of clinical judgment in healthcare team members through role modeling, teaching, coaching, and/or mentoring
Standard 5 Ethics

The acute care CNS makes decisions and implements actions to ensure the delivery of safe, competent and ethical care that is age appropriate and congruent with patient and family needs and values.

Performance Expectations:

- Fosters the establishment and maintenance of an ethical environment
- Facilitates resolution of ethical conflicts and moral distress using ethical principles to promote a healthy work environment
- Implements interventions that consider the impact of scientific advances, cost, clinical effectiveness, patient values and preference, diversity, and other external influences on healthcare
- Serves as a mentor and role model to others in developing moral agency by fostering professional accountability in self and others.
- Facilitates ethical, non-coercive decision making by older adults and/or families/caregivers for maintaining everyday living, receiving treatment, initiating advanced directives and implementing end-of-life care.
Standard 6 Collaboration

The acute care CNS effectively partners with interprofessional colleagues in the care of patients and patient populations to improve patient outcomes.

Performance Expectations:

- Facilitates the provision of clinically competent care through education, role modeling, team building and quality monitoring
- Fosters an interprofessional approach to safety, quality improvement, evidence-based practice, research, and translation of research into practice
- Implements outcome focused patient care programs
- Mentors healthcare team members to understand and use the expertise of others
- Establish collaborative relationships within and across disciplines that promote patient safety, culturally competent care and clinical excellence.
Standard 7 Research/Clinical Inquiry

The acute care CNS identifies research priority in practice, participates in research, translates scientific evidence and promotes evidence-based practice.

Performance Expectations:

- Identifies clinical opportunities amenable to research
- Conducts research to advance the science of nursing practice
- Participates in conducting and implementing research/clinical inquiry
- Analyzes research findings and other evidence for application to clinical practice
- Synthesizes and translates research findings to determine the need for changes in practice.
- Evaluates patient care practices based on research and experiential knowledge and integrates changes into practice to improve safety, efficiency, reliability and quality.
- Role models and mentors staff regarding the dissemination, implementation, and evaluation of research findings
- Communicates research results and develops a process to incorporate research findings into practice
- Evaluates and facilitates incorporation of new products, techniques, and technologies into practice
**Standard 8 Resource Utilization**

The acute care CNS influences resource utilization in order to promote safe, quality, and cost effective patient care.

**Performance Expectations:**

- Leads clinical inquiry through quality improvement activities.
- Considers fiscal and budgetary implications in decision making regarding practice and system modifications.
- Conducts cost/benefit and cost avoidance analysis of programs, processes and technologies.
- Evaluates impact of introduction or withdrawal of products, services, and technologies.
- Facilitates access for patients to appropriate healthcare services.
- Assists staff in the development of innovative, cost effective programs or protocols of care (care paths).
- Interprets and facilitates integration of organizational mission, goals, and systems into patient care practices.
- Role models and mentors innovative systems thinking and resource use among the healthcare team.
- Develops strategies to facilitate transition of patients through the healthcare system.
- Assesses, facilitates, and advocates the impact of social, political, regulatory, and economic forces on the delivery of care.
- Facilitates safe and effective transitions across levels of care, including acute, community-based, and long-term care (e.g. home, assisted living, hospice, nursing homes) for older adults and their families.
- Utilizes resource/programs to promote functional, physical, and mental wellness in older adults.
Standard 9 Leadership

The acute care CNS manages change and leads others to influence practice and political processes within and across systems.

Performance Expectations:

- Leads micro and macro system level change
- Masters and employs skilled communication.
- Uses leadership, team building, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills to promote a healthy work environment.
- Provides leadership in implementation of innovation
- Facilitates the creation of a common vision for care within the healthcare team and system.
- Role models professional leadership and accountability for nursing’s role within the healthcare team and community.
Standard 10 Systems Thinking

The acute care CNS develops and participates in organizational systems and processes to promote optimal outcomes.

Performance Expectations:

- Applies knowledge of organizational theories and systems to provide safe, patient centered, high-quality, and cost effective care.
- Performs system-level assessments to identify variables that influence nursing practice and outcomes. (C.2/page 47)
- Determines nursing practice and system interventions that promote patient, family, and community safety.
- Designs and develops care paths and initiatives across the continuum of acute care services.
- Advocates for equity in health and health care for patient populations of diverse cultural, ethnic, and spiritual backgrounds across the life span.
- Evaluates the ongoing integration of evidence and practice standards into systems of health care delivery.
- Identifies, participates in, and assists with the development of institutional and organizational system responses to natural and man-made disasters.
- Participates in professional organizations to address issues of concern in meeting patients’ needs and improving nursing practice and system effectiveness.
- Integrates knowledge of governmental and regulatory opportunities and constraints to affect patient transitions across the continuum of care.
- Advocates for legislation and policies that promote health and improve care delivery.