

# Shelter Nurse (RN) Job Description for General Population Shelters

## Capabilities

Public Health Nurses (PHNs) can provide nursing services to general population shelter residents that are consistent with their routine scope of practice in the local health department, which includes health promotion, disease education, health histories, nursing assessments and triage for referrals to medical facilities based on presenting acuity of care.

The NC Board of Nursing allows nurses to recommend over the counter drugs (OTC) and distribute based on the clients' complaint and the nurse's knowledge about the OTC medication the nurse recommends. *Administration of any medication without a standing order or individual order is outside a nurses' scope of practice.*<sup>1</sup> Residents should be allowed to self-administer all medications.

In addition, the Nurse Practice Act <sup>2</sup> allows all nurses to practice at their highest level of education and training. Standing orders are not required for any nursing care or support which nurses are expected to provide in a general population shelter. The elements of first aid and mental health first aid are taught as nursing assessment and interventions in nursing education. Therefore, standing orders are not required to administer first aid or mental health first aid. However, some local health departments have decided to create Standing Orders to cover basic first aid, mental health first aid and common physical discomforts often observed when persons are under physical and emotional stress.

If the host county operates under Standing Orders, then PHNs deployed from other counties to serve in shelters are to work under the host county's Standing Orders. The host county is expected to provide the deployed PHNs with Just-In-Time-Training on the Standing Orders/Protocols upon arrival at the shelter.

NOTE: American Red Cross RNs practice to the highest level of their education and training without any Standing Orders. They do not provide physician directed medical care but do provide care to assist clients in maintaining their pre-event level of independence and adherence to their personal Health Care Provider plan of care. Therefore, they do not follow a host county's Standing Orders.

## **Eligibility Requirements:**

- Current CPR and AED Certification
- Unencumbered NC RN license or approved to practice via the Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (eNLC)<sup>3</sup>

## **Expectations of a Deployed Public Health Nurse in a General Population Shelter**

The following activities are within the Scope of Practice for Public Health Nurses.

### **Education**

- Providing communicable disease prevention and non-communicable disease management education, resources, and guidance to shelter staff and residents.
- Assisting clients in understanding how the disaster impacted their physical health and mental well-being.

### **Surveillance**

- Conducting communicable disease outbreak monitoring.
- Reporting communicable disease outbreaks to the NC Department of Public Health.
- Initiate isolation/quarantine protocols for clients with communicable illness (i.e. colds, flu, or norovirus).
- Assisting with disease surveillance activities (e.g. contacting hospitals & health care providers regarding signs of infectious diseases, communicable diseases, or reportable communicable diseases).
- Monitor client population's health (presence of chronic disease, communicable disease and injuries).
- Evaluating client's past medical history and pre-existing conditions that may have been exacerbated by the emergency or occupancy in the shelter.

### **Referral**

- Triage residents prior to admission to the shelter.
- Making recommendations to the shelter manager when a resident should be transferred to a special medical shelter or medical center when presenting

residents fall outside of the medical management capabilities of the general population shelter.

- Assessing clients' mental health status and making appropriate referrals.
- Coordinate with EMS to arrange transportation for residents referred to special medical shelters or medical centers. Referral and discharge planning for persons discharged from general population shelters.

### **Maintaining Independence**

- Applying first aid.
- Assisting clients to obtain special diets by coordinating with food service provider.
- Assisting clients with replacement of lost/damaged medications or Durable Medical Equipment (DME) (i.e. wheelchair, raised/handicap accessible toilet seat, cane, or walker).
- Requesting interpretation or translation assistance for clients.
- Recommending and distributing over the counter medications.

### **Operations Management**

- Setting up and providing clinical management and assistance with staffing for general population shelters *where the local health department is identified as having this role in their county's All-Hazards Plan.*
- Maintaining documentation in all records and reports.
- Assuring documentation and referrals are in accordance with American Red Cross confidentiality policies. ARC is exempt from HIPAA law.
- Setting up, managing, directing, staffing and evaluating mass immunization clinics.
- Setting up, managing, directing, staffing and evaluating mass dispensing sites.

### **Host County Just-in-Time-Training (JITT) Should Include:**

- How to Complete cot-to-cot assessments using Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Services, Support and Self-Determination, Transportation (C-MIST) Worksheet<sup>4</sup> to monitor for declining health, unmet needs, etc.
- Local Health Department Standing Orders (if applicable).

- Shelter policies including triage protocol.
- Tour of the facility and review emergency and security plans.
- Documentation requirements and protocols for ensuring HIPAA compliance.

### **Recommended Training:**

- [Basic First Aid refresher-online](#)
- [Mental Health First Aid](#) or Psychological First Aid (see attached training list)
- [Kansas City Medical Reserve Corps – Shelter Video Trainings](#)
- American Red Cross Shelter Fundamentals Training (see attached training list)

### **References**

1. NC Board of Nursing Position Statement on Standing Orders. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbon.com/vdownloads/position-statements-decision-trees/standing-orders.pdf>
2. North Carolina Board of Nursing /Nursing Practice Act. Retrieved from [https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/byarticle/chapter\\_90/article\\_9a.html](https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/byarticle/chapter_90/article_9a.html)
3. North Carolina Board of Nursing/licensing and eNLC. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbon.com/licensure-listing-nurse-licensure-compact>
4. American Red Cross C-MIST form. Retrieved from <http://www.drc-group.com/library/exercise/osc/OSC-CMISTWorksheet.pdf>