



Nurses and
Nurse Practitioners
of British Columbia

NNPBC Registered Psychiatric Nurse Advocacy Toolkit

Reference Guide

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Introduction

NNPBC is proud to be the professional association representing all four nursing designations in BC. Within this mandate, NNPBC seeks to advance the nursing profession and transform health and social policy by elevating the unique and critical voice of nurses.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses play an important role in BC's health care system and have specific qualifications and expertise with which they can contribute meaningfully to health care solutions in BC.

The NNPBC Registered Psychiatric Nurse Advocacy Toolkit is intended to serve as a reference guide for BC RPNs interested in engaging with the public and with community and government representatives to increase awareness and advocate for the RPN role. This guide includes step-by-step processes as well as tips and tricks for communicating with the media, engaging on social media, and writing advocacy letters to local officials.

For questions related to information in this guide, please contact info@nnpbc.com.

1. Media Tips and Tricks for Registered Psychiatric Nurses

Background

NNPBC recognizes that RPNs may read and hear a variety of stories in the media related to psychiatric nursing practice. These may be traditional media 'stories' or they may be op-eds published in local papers.

The NNPBC Communications Team does its best to not only monitor media, but to build and cultivate relationships with various media outlets. In the last 18 months, NNPBC's media profile and exposure has grown, and media outlets are seeking the NNPBC perspective on key issues. All media is posted on the NNPBC [media page](#) when available. We encourage all to take a look, have a read, or listen at any time. NNPBC will also ensure recent media is highlighted in our monthly newsletters and on social media channels.

When new stories break, NNPBC may respond through traditional media (if applicable) and/or via written statements that we post to our website. NNPBC does not necessarily respond to every issue that arises. Responses are based on a variety of strategic considerations. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to info@nnpbc.com.

Purpose

This document is meant to provide some high-level key messages to RPNs who may wish to respond to media pieces as *individuals* as well as some general tips and tricks. RPNs who choose to respond to media are *not* speaking on behalf of the Association, nor does NNPBC endorse those opinions or perspectives. However, we have understood that some guidance around key messages may be helpful. At any time, if as an individual you believe that a reply would be better served coming from NNPBC, please reach out (info@nnpbc.com) as noted above.

Key Messages

Key messages are a useful way to share detailed and accurate information in short sound bites. Consider the examples outlined below:

What is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse?

- RPNs are highly qualified health care providers who provide fulsome health care services with a focus on emotional, psychosocial, and mental health needs.
- RPNs provide health care services to patients and clients of all ages, in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, mental health, occupational health, residential care, complex care, and community care.
- RPNs work with patients and clients to create care plans based on an individual's complex and specific needs and personal wishes, considering medications, patient and family history, allergies, underlying conditions, comorbidities, and patient preferences.
- RPNs promote health literacy by educating and informing patients, clients, and the public about health and wellness best practices and by sharing evidence-informed advice and materials.
- Across settings, RPNs may assess patients to diagnose conditions, administer oxygen, nutrition, or medications, prescribe certain medications, collect samples, perform wound care, record vital signs, and discuss options for physical, mental, emotional and psychosocial health.



- RPNs support patient- and family-centred care, knowing that when patient and family preferences are included, and when patient values are included in health care decisions, patients experience better health care outcomes.
- RPNs are educators who share and promote best practices in the provision of high quality, ethical care.
- RPNs communicate broadly with other nurses and members of an effective health care team to ensure that health needs are being met for patients, families, units, clinics, and communities.
- RPNs value collaboration and the ability to work closely with health care colleagues to provide exceptional and interdisciplinary care to the people of BC.

General Messaging

- Health care is complex, and the needs of the population are multi-faceted and varied.
- RPNs provide health care services that are culturally safe, inclusive, accessible, and equitable.
- RPNs advocate for the health and mental health of patients and clients of all backgrounds, including marginalized and underserved populations.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses provide nursing services to individuals and communities to help promote, maintain, and restore health and wellness, and to prevent illness and injury.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses practice independently and in collaboration with other health professionals.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses work collaboratively with other nurses, physicians, and allied health providers to deliver holistic team-based care, focusing on providing quality health care to improve patient health outcomes.
- RPNs provide health care services with a special focus on emotional, mental, and psychosocial needs, to ensure that patients and clients are fully supported on their health care journey.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses exercise independent clinical judgement to provide evidence-informed, ethical care for patients and clients.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses use their expertise to assess, diagnose, and provide therapeutic interventions to help patients and clients on their health journey.



Registered Psychiatric Nurses in Primary Care

- BC's Primary Care Strategy is taking steps to ensure people have faster and better access to the day-to-day health care services they need by investing in team-based primary care.
- RPNs play a vital role in primary care settings, providing essential nursing services with a focus on emotional, mental, and psychosocial health to support patients and their families.
- As part of primary care teams, RPNs work collaboratively with a team of health care professionals which may include other nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, therapists, and allied health professionals.
- RPNs conduct comprehensive health assessments to determine a patient's health needs, consider mental, emotional, and psychosocial supports, review health history, and coordinate care plans.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses initiate and coordinate patient health care plans, considering patient preferences and expertise from other members of an interdisciplinary team.

- RPNs understand the symptoms, effects, and complex health, mental health, emotional and psychosocial needs of patients with underlying and inheritable conditions, comorbidities, and immunosuppression.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses advocate for patient health and support and involve patients in the decision-making and management of their health and welfare.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses provide information about medications and counsel patients and clients on medication therapies, uses, and possible interactions.
- Our professional association, NNPBC, believes that it is imperative that British Columbians have access to a regular, consistent primary care provider that puts the focus on the patient and their wellness, ensuring the highest quality of care is provided.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses in Acute and Specialized Care

- Registered Psychiatric Nurses offer immediate support to individuals experiencing acute mental health crises or emergencies.
- RPNs assist patients and clients with navigating the BC health care system, including connecting them to various resources, considering mental, emotional, and psychosocial supports, and coordinating care with providers as part of effective, team-based care.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses provide comprehensive, clinical expertise in all areas of health across the health care system.
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses with certified practice provide effective support to individuals with substance use health requirements by diagnosing, prescribing, compounding, dispensing, administering, and/or ordering medications for treatment where necessary.
- RPNs in specialty settings contribute to positive health outcomes, improving the responsiveness and function of interdisciplinary teams while also complementing existing nursing and physician roles.
- RPNs maintain a focus on patient transition between sectors to ensure effective continuity of care.
- RPNs provide comprehensive care to patients in hospital, and incorporate health promotion, prevention, and management strategies as they relate to specific diseases and/or chronic conditions.

Some Things to Remember

There's no such thing as "off the record." When speaking to media assume everything is "on record." When requested to speak to the media, know the source and intent for the coverage. When applicable, consult with NNPBC, BCCNM or your Health Authority prior to speaking to the media. Ask if it is possible for you to see and approve the media piece before it is made public. (*Note:* This isn't always an option, but it never hurts to ask.)

Be aware of who manages what. Always ensure your employer is comfortable with you speaking to media. If you belong to a health authority, consult with your health authority's communications team. NNPBC manages and approves NNPBC media; we do not manage nor approve media for individual RPNs.

Follow BCCNM social media guidelines. Nurses understand their professional, ethical, and legal obligations to protect the public and act in a way that maintains professionalism and the public's trust. RPNs can view social media standards and information on the [BCCNM website](#).

Keep it simple. Be clear and factual; avoid too much jargon.



Don't compare. When responding to a media piece in either a written op-ed or via social media, it is important to remember that no profession is served well by characterizing themselves in opposition to another profession.

Focus on the positives. It is therefore important to focus on the good work that nurses do, the ways in which nurses fill gaps in the health care system and the evidence that clearly demonstrates that nurses are not only a cost-effective system level solution, but highly regarded by patients.

Monitor tone. Always be professional in your tone and remember that sometimes people may not understand the distinction between providers.

Don't be reactive. Take your time before responding or commenting publicly. Resist the urge to “shoot back” or be overly reactive. In an online world it can be particularly easy to tweet a response without fully considering the ramifications. Even in a short 280-character reply, both words and tone matter. Remember, once your comment is online, consider it there forever.

Share information. Use your responses as an opportunity to educate and inform, never to shame or blame.

2. Advocacy Tips and Tricks for Registered Psychiatric Nurses

Formulate and Clarify Your Message

Key Messages

A key message is a great way to deliver a consistent set of short messages that speak to the issues that matter most to you. A good key message is relatively short and is not open for misinterpretation. A well-defined message has two key components. First as noted, it is *simple, direct, and concise*. Second, it *defines the issues on your own terms and in your own words*. Your message will be much more meaningful if you express it in your own words with all of your opinion, frustration, joy or anger included.

Ask Relevant Questions

We have some suggestions that can help you to ask questions that are relevant and important.

- Think about the health policy issues that are affecting your work, your well-being and ask the sort of questions you feel health and political leaders should be answering.
- Keep your questions short and succinct. Stay away from questions that can be yes/no answers, but don't ask complicated, compound questions.
- Focus on asking open questions like "What do you think about...?" or "How do you feel about...?" Or "How would you handle this process?" or "How would you implement the steps you discussed?"



Gain Traction

Getting the Attention of Policy Makers and Health Leaders

The challenge for many of us is learning or figuring out how to be included, and how to be invited to share your opinion with those who can best affect change.

Nevertheless, there are certainly ways to become involved, and become the type of person whose presence and opinion are valued. Political and health leaders hear from a lot of people. Some of them come with concerns about injustices or problems. Others come forward with solutions and suggestions that are well thought out and considered. It's not a surprise who the preferred person is in this situation. No question most of us would rather listen to the individual who comes with a plan and ideas.

Connect with Health and Political Leaders

They have offices, office staff, social media accounts etc. Make a point of talking to them. Don't consume their time. Share your well-thought-out ideas and opinions and move on. Plan your questions and key messages, introduce yourself, pass them your (virtual) card and engage in a short conversation with them.

Use Advocacy Channels and Platforms

Use Social Media Platforms

Most organizations, political leaders, health care leaders and people in general are using at least one social media platform, and most of us use multiple platforms. Follow these leaders and organizations. Check out what they say. Respond to a tweet or a Facebook post, share it, retweet it, like it. Or use it as a space to ask that person questions. Respond to them using some of the tips above with respect to key messages. Ask them focused questions and engage them.

Keep in mind though that for many people social media is a tool used to criticize others in large part because you get to be anonymous and hide behind a computer. Don't fall for this idea that all social media interactions should be contentious or fraught in order to be effective. Social media is a powerful tool that is about engagement, a way to make connections and build bridges and as opposed to tearing them down. Don't shy away but be constructive.

When using social media, always remember you must follow [BCCNM Social Media Standards](#).

It's worth noting that we have all seen by now some of the online videos posted by nurses highlighting difficult conditions at work and/or speaking about difficulties in the profession. In some cases, nurses and nurse practitioners are highlighting difficult working conditions, areas for concern, or are sharing their very valid fears etc. We would never tell anyone to not do something they feel strongly about (assuming it fit within the parameters of the BCCNM standards). We do ask though that you consider the audience for these videos. Is it for a political leader? A manager at work? The public in general? With that in mind we always ask that you keep the most critical piece in mind: you are trusted by the public, what you say resonates and matters so take the opportunity to be constructive and solutions oriented. And if you are identifying yourself as a professional nurse practitioner in BC in your social media profile, then you are expected to adhere to your professional standards.



A Word About Petitions

In the era of online petitions and GoFundMe accounts it's easy to focus on using these avenues to make a point or to ask for change. The reality, however, is that rarely, if ever, things change because people have signed a petition. That is not to say they always fail but that politicians may be inclined to take up a petitioned cause only if it's easy and something they might agree with anyway. For example, online petitioners claimed that their petition led to the banning of plastic bags in Victoria, BC. The truth is though this was well-underway and an 'easy' win, meaning that the petition was not the reason for the change. If you love petitions, please go ahead and use them but there are other more constructive ways to ensure that your important issues become part of the public dialogue. Additionally, there are times that petitions can actually damage your cause, because they create a sense of 'ganging up' against an individual rather than advocating in favour of a position.

Focus on Objective Messaging

Understand Partisan, Non-Partisan, Bipartisan

NNPBC is a non-partisan organization. Non-partisan is defined as "objective" or not being controlled or unduly influenced by a political party or special interest group. In other words, we have no particular bias towards any political party and do not endorse or support one political party. Instead, we are interested in talking to and hearing all perspectives on issues that impact nursing and working towards a solutions-oriented approach.

On the flip side, sometimes organizations (or individuals) are partisan, which is defined as something that is partial to a particular person, party, or outcome. There's nothing wrong with this, and many nurses have very good reason to be partisan -- perhaps they tend to have conservative or liberal views or feel strongly about one party or another. NNPBC welcomes the involvement of nurses who have a partisan viewpoint -- but just note that we won't publish or support anything overly partisan. To represent nursing effectively in

the province, we need to be able to work with governments across the political spectrum and to maintain constructive relationships with decision makers.

Ironically, the third term, bipartisan, is probably the most problematic, and maybe the most frequently used term of the three. Technically, bipartisan is defined as “composed of members from both parties.”

As a non-partisan organization, NNPBC welcomes all nurses to bring issues to the forefront, particularly during times of public health crisis. In most instances, taking a partisan position is not helpful, and could potentially be harmful to the profession’s capacity for influence as a shaper of public and health policy. If you as an individual wish to take a position on anything a political leader or party shares or notes during a crisis such as this, ask yourself if your politics will help or hurt the situation? It’s okay to be critical of the decisions or actions of political leaders, but unprofessional to attack them personally. You may want to express your outrage on behalf of populations not being well served by current policies but be sure you come to the table with a solution for the issue with which you are being critical. In a time of crisis such as this, when our political leaders from all parties are working together and putting aside politics for the greater good, party politics will not reflect the urgency of the situation.

And finally...

We hope that these guidelines will encourage, rather than discourage you from the important advocacy role that nursing plays within society. Many of the social justice issues that arise in the health domain have been triggered by strong professional advocacy from a nursing perspective. We have the public trust – let’s use it in a manner that is not self-serving but enacted in a professional manner to serve the public, including the sectors of society least able to advocate on behalf of themselves!

3. Creating Key Messages

Why Key Messages Matter

A key message is a great way to deliver a consistent set of short messages that speak to the issues that matter most to you. A good key message is relatively short and is not open for misinterpretation. A well-defined message has two key components. First as noted, it is simple, direct, and concise. Second, it defines the issues on your own terms and in your own words. Your message will be much more meaningful if you express it in your own words with all of your opinion, frustration, joy or anger included.

Primary Considerations

Keep it high-level. Consider who you are speaking to. How you might address another health professional is not the same as how you will address media or policy makers. Other health professionals are likely to understand words like 'longitudinal', but others may not really know what it means. Ensure your messages are targeted for your audience.

Consider tone. Ask yourself what tone you are taking. One thing to keep in mind is that people often confuse advocacy and complaining. Complaining is about articulating a feeling, advocacy is focused on making a change. People do not respond well to being shamed or by being made to feel stupid, or out of touch. Keep this in mind when writing anything and remember your opportunity is to be seen as a reasonable, thoughtful professional whom you WANT people to come back to for more information.



Refining the Message

Be concise. Each statement should be 1-3 sentences and about 30 seconds when spoken.

Be strategic. Ask yourself what purpose does my message serve? Reminder, if your message only serves you, you are complaining, not advocating.

Be relevant. No one needs to hear about what did or didn't happen 10 years ago. Stay on message with the key issues impacting the profession now.

Be compelling. Not all key messages stimulate action, some are just informational (and informational is good as long as the information is fact based) and that's ok. Be sure to write them in such a way that people want to use them.

Be clear. Health care jargon is only meaningful to a small group and do not rely on acronyms.

Be active. Use the active voice.

Be adaptable. Key messages will need to be tailored to different audiences.

Be authentic. When you are passionate about your work it shows. Being authentic is always meaningful.

4. Using Social Media

Professional Obligations

As noted above, the BC College of Nurses and Midwives has some excellent and clear guidelines on their website for how nurses should conduct themselves on social media platforms. Please check those out any time if you need a reminder. At a high level the BCCNM information focuses on the following areas (all taken from the [BCCNM website](#)):

Professional Image

Use the same level of professionalism in your online interactions as you do face-to-face. Keep your personal and professional lives separate. Use different accounts for personal and professional activities.

Confidentiality

Do not share any client information on social media sites. Leaving out details when you post information or images does not protect client confidentiality. Report confidentiality breaches to the right person, immediately.

Privacy

Set and maintain your privacy settings to limit access to your personal information. Be aware of your privacy settings and know that even if you use the highest privacy settings, others can copy and share your information without your knowledge or permission.

Boundaries

Set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Just as with face-to-face relationships, this applies online too. Communicate these boundaries to clients and end your professional relationships appropriately. Don't accept "friend" requests from clients or former clients on your personal social media accounts. If you use social media with clients for work purposes, such as client teaching and resource-sharing, use a professional account separate from your personal one. Be clear about how your use of social media supports professional practice and make sure organizational policies addressing privacy and confidentiality are in place.

Expectations

Use caution if you identify yourself as a nurse practitioner online, outside of your employment. If you do so, others may ask for advice, which could lead to a nurse-client relationship. Using a name that hides your real identity does not release you from this expectation. Know this and practice accordingly.

Integrity

Protect yours and the profession's integrity. Use proper communication channels to discuss, report and resolve workplace issues — not social media. Refer to colleagues or clients online with the same level of respect as you would in the workplace. Before you blog, tweet or share information about your practice, reflect on your intentions and the possible consequences. Even if you don't post yourself, consider the impact of "liking" someone else's disrespectful comments.

Employer Policies

Know and follow employer policies on using social media, photography, computers and mobile devices, including personal, at work. If you work with a Health Authority, be sure to check their website or communication team for this information. (View the policies from [Vancouver Coastal Health](#) and [Fraser](#)



[Health](#) for reference.) If you need to communicate with clients via social media, use a professional account and work with your employer to develop policies.

Accountability

Make sure you can answer for your actions. Reflect on why, how and when you use social media and help others do the same. Know that personal use of social media while working can create client risks through distraction and interruptions; and in some situations, could be viewed as client abandonment. If you are uncomfortable discussing your online behaviour with others, consider this a red flag. Use professional judgment to keep your obligations to clients, colleagues and employers front and center.

Recommendations

Be an advocate not an arguer. An advocate publicly recommends and highlights areas that require change and/or stand up for something. Arguing is about stating a strong opinion on a topic without necessarily working to affect change. Ask yourself, does my post inform and pose a new way forward or am I arguing?

Be informative. It is perfectly fine to use social media to promote your profession, but the tone should be focused on providing useful information to people. "Did you know that you can... We hope you find it helpful to..." etc.

Be collegial. This goes without saying. While it may be tempting to scold an injustice and while that scolding may attract attention, it may not be the right kind of attention. Also remember that online the narrative can shift quickly, an internet 'rabble-rouser' can fast become a target of attack.

Be respectful. This too goes without saying. Attacks are never condoned, and it is very possible to disagree and not resort to name calling or generalizations.

Be thorough. If followers ask a question, answer it. If the answer requires research or thoughtful detail, provide it. Provide real life examples when appropriate, and always maintain and respect patient confidentiality and privacy at all times (and don't forget BCCNM standards and your employer policies!).

What NOT to do...

While frustrations are real, arguing or taking a combative approach does not always serve the larger purpose and can brand you a 'problem' (and government does not like to listen to 'problems'). Resist speaking in absolutes 'Nurses never get what we deserve, and no one respects us.' While you may feel this way, consider framing those frustrations constructively such as 'Nurses are key players in the health care system and are ready to be utilized to our full scope.'

Sample Social Media Posts

The following posts are focused on advocating for the RPN role and do so without harming or finger-pointing against other professionals.

- Nursing innovation is paramount to the development and further modernization of our health care system. At point of care and through all stages of our lives, in policy, research and education, RPNs bring clinical expertise and critical perspective to the health system. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs provide comprehensive care to patients and clients across the lifespan and work with all populations including Indigenous peoples, adults, older adults, and children. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs are highly skilled health professionals who have successfully completed regulatory-approved nursing education with an increased focus on psychosocial, mental, and emotional health. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs practice both independently and as part of interdisciplinary teams to ensure that patients are at the centre of their care, receiving the type of care they need, when they need it. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs develop strong working relationships with other health providers, communicate regularly with patients and clients, and ensure that safe, appropriate supports and resources are in place for timely, high-quality care. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs promote the maintenance and restoration of health, with an acute awareness of how an individual's emotional, mental, and social needs play a part in their overall health and recovery. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs are essential leaders in health care and contribute to health care reform and policy development. RPNs hold a variety of clinical, professional and leadership roles in health care, education, management, research, and administration. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs are committed to working with all patients and their families to improve physical and mental health and keep people at the centre of the care they receive. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs provide care in settings across the health system, including in primary care, community clinics, hospitals, public health centres, long-term and assisted living facilities, residential care, emergency relief response, treatment centres, mental health, schools, rural and remote locations, corrections, and more. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs coordinate and participate in fulsome, patient-centre approaches to care alongside RNs, LPNs, NPs, physicians, and other allied health professionals. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- RPNs evaluate and assess all parts of an individual's health including physical, mental, emotional, developmental, and environmental aspects and needs. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs
- Without robust and sustainable primary health care delivery the health care system will not function. RPNs and nurses of all designations offer a solution to these challenges. @MinisterofHealth @MLAforyourarea @nnpbc #NursingLeads #NursingIs

5. Advocacy Letter Writing Guide

Overview

Learning to communicate your own perspective, thoughts, or experience in an advocacy letter is a skill that goes beyond signing your name on a template or a petition. Learning how to write a strong letter is an important way to advocate for your profession and it empowers professionals to speak up on issues that matter. Elected officials may have a strong understanding of what advocacy groups are saying about an issue, but they may not understand how a particular decision affects you as an individual member of a profession.

A good letter should:

- Explain how a particular issue affects you or your group,
- Show support for a proposed law, policy, or course of action, and/or
- Oppose a proposed law, policy, or course of action.

When should you write to an elected official?

- You want an official to consider a certain action or policy (e.g., increasing funding for educational programs for example).
- There is an upcoming vote on a policy that concerns your group. Letters are most effective when the vote is about to be taken. This is a good time to use e-mail.
- You want to respond (positively or negatively) to a completed action or a change in policy (e.g., enacting a new policy, opposing a perspective that an elected official has articulated).
- You want to point out a deficiency or need in a particular area.
- You need information (e.g., about what happened the last time a certain issue came up for a vote).
- You need advice (how to approach another official, what kind of event will attract large numbers of officials to take notice, etc.). In this instance, you would probably be writing to an official that you have already had positive contact with.

Adapted from [University of Kansas Community Tool Box](#).

Advocacy Letter Template

Date

Recipient Name and Address (be sure to get titles right!)

If delivered by email include the email address

Dear [local official]

Introduction/Section 1: Official opening – state your name and why you are writing.

- Establish the relationship. How are you related to the recipient? If you are writing to a local, provincial, or federal politician, include your riding. If you are writing to the Minister of Health include your profession.
- State your purpose, use plain language, and keep focused on the specific action or issue you are writing about.
- Do not assume the recipient has zero context on your profession or the issues but by the same token do not assume they have all the context you might.

Section 2: Impart your understanding of the issue using facts.

- Concisely convey your understanding of the issue—highlight why it is crucial to act.
- Remember to offer your expertise while continuing to use simple language to communicate the problem.

Section 3: Get personal.

- Reflect and describe how this issue affects your life. Why is it important to you? Include a story that has shaped your position on this issue. Of course, remember that there are guidelines and standards that safeguard how you use personal information, so be sure your stories do not breach confidentiality.

Section 4: One more time for the people in the back!

- Use this short paragraph to restate your desired action.
- If you are opposing an action in your letter, use this paragraph to offer an alternative action.

Closing/Section 5: The end.

- Offer the recipient a thank you for their time and attention.
- Inform them that you expect a reply. Remember to include your contact information so they know how to reach you.

Adapted from [University of Kansas Community Tool Box](#).

Sample Letter

Date

MLA Name

Contact Details

Dear MLA INSERT NAME HERE,

I am writing to you today as a Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN) licensed to practice in British Columbia (BC). I have been practicing as a Registered Psychiatric Nurse since [insert date] and currently provide care to patients for [insert role or practice] in [insert city or community]. I am writing you today to bring awareness of the RPN role in the broader health systems.

RPNs are highly skilled health care professionals who work in all settings across the health care spectrum. RPNs are educated in the same foundational body of nursing knowledge as Registered Nurses, with an additional focus on mental, emotional, developmental, and psychosocial health needs. However, while RPNs fill a wide variety of roles throughout our health system, members of the public, patients, and other health professionals often remain unclear about the RPN role and the multitude of ways in which we can provide solutions to some of BC's most challenging health care needs.

Current and previous governments have learned quite a bit about the role of nursing in health system developments because of strong advocacy by Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC (NNPBC), yet we are still often secondary to broader conversations that focus on the ways in which family physicians provide primary care to patients and clients. While this is certainly true and we have immense respect for our colleagues in health, the role of Registered Psychiatric Nurses, along with other nursing designations including Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Nurse Practitioners, are equally important in providing primary and community-based care.

RPNs are highly skilled health professionals who provide safe, ethical, and competent nursing services for the promotion of and maintenance of health and wellness. In BC, RPNs adhere to very high regulatory standards of practice to ensure the highest quality care for patients and clients. RPNs work closely with their patients, provide health and education counselling, coordinate health care plans, coordinate care with other health providers, and seek to guide patients to make informed health and lifestyle choices, which ultimately may lead to reduced health care costs.

Changing the way in which we define and are inclusive of other providers serves as a model for a new way of thinking about health care delivery, one that focuses on inclusivity and the necessity for all providers to work collaboratively for the benefit of the patients we serve.

To that end, we would appreciate the following:

- Reach out to NNPBC when you are seeking information about nurses. A member of the NNPBC team will always be happy to provide context and discuss further.
- Include nurses of all designations (RNs, RPNs, LPNs, NPs) in conversations when you are speaking about health care providers.
- Use language that is inclusive of nursing on web materials, written and social media communications.



- The current government would benefit from additional education with respect to why and how nurses can be more fully utilized and regarded as a key solution to the current health care human resource crisis.
- Similarly, the current government can better seek nursing led solutions in general to the challenges we face as a province.
- When speaking to the media, please speak about nurses and other ways in which nursing can be better utilized across this province.

Nursing-led solutions are integral to resolving the health care crisis we collectively face today and to ensuring the viability of publicly funded health care well into the future. Without actively being inclusive of nursing and without greater awareness of the nursing role, the lives of British Columbians will continue to be put at risk by shortages, closures, and barriers to care.

Again, thank you for your time and please note an [Appendix](#) follows which will provide some additional information as well links and resources.

Sincerely,

INSERT YOUR NAME AND TITLE HERE

INSERT YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION HERE



6. Appendices

Appendix A: The Role of a Registered Psychiatric Nurse

Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia

| | |
|-----|-----|
| LPN | NP |
| RN | RPN |

What is the role of a Registered Psychiatric Nurse

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) focus on psychosocial, developmental, emotional and mental health needs. RPNs care for people of all ages experiencing issues related to mental health and wellness, substance use or complex behavioral challenges. RPNs are skilled practitioners trained to comprehensively assess, intervene and evaluate the holistic health status and effectiveness of interventions for individuals facing complex psychiatric and co-morbid health conditions.

- Research**
Engage in life-long learning focused on all aspects of psychiatric care including mental and physical health, psychopathology, pathophysiology, health promotion, disease prevention, rehabilitation and recovery to ensure that patients and clients receive a holistic health care experience.
- Health Promotion & Education**
Promote holistic approaches to care including ways to maintain physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Inform the public and health care partners on the importance of health for the body and wellness for the soul.
- Collaboration**
Coordinate and participate in fulsome, patient-centred approaches to care alongside registered nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, and other allied health care workers. Ensure that patients and clients receive care that fosters their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs.
- Treatment & Care**
Provide thorough, holistic, integrative care to patients and clients with particular involvement in psychosocial and psychological care, substance use and mental health treatment and management. Develop a therapeutic relationship with patients and clients to ensure complete end-to-end care.
- Assessment**
Evaluate and assess all parts of the individual including physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, developmental, and environmental aspects to determine appropriate paths of care. Review patient and client care on an ongoing basis for quality assurance.
- Leadership**
Lead and guide other health care professionals in providing a balanced and team-based approach to care. Demonstrate superb commitment to the whole person and all aspects of health.
- Advocacy**
Advocate for further development of mental health care, resources and understanding. Be a champion for equal care for all patients and clients especially those with marginalized and stigmatized health care needs.

nnpbc.com #NursingMatters

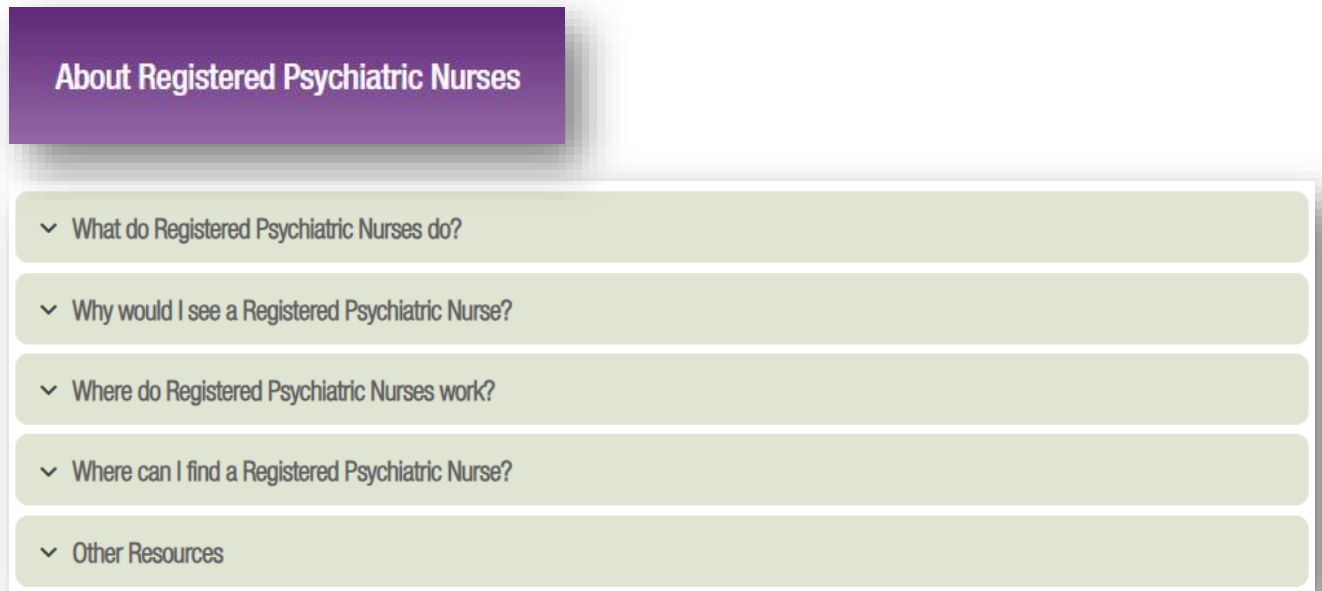
Click image to access the PDF version.



Appendix B: Information for the Public

NNPBC has created a public-facing page with information about Registered Psychiatric Nurses and other nursing designations in BC.

Find the page at: nnpbc.com/aboutRPNs



Click the image to view this page.