

Australasian Sexual Health and HIV Nurses Association Practice Standards

Third Edition

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FOREWORD

Registered Nurses (RNs) working in the specialties of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) nursing are employed in a diverse range of health care settings including clinical practice, research, education, and management as well as sub-specialities such as transgender care, Women's & Men's health and midwifery practice. The first edition of the Australasian Sexual Health Nurses Association (ASHNA) Competency Standards were developed in 1998 after the professional organisation, ASHNA, was formed in 1991. In 2009, the association included HIV nursing to become the Australasian Sexual Health & HIV Nurses Association (ASHHNA), as we are known today. The Second Edition was released the following year including standards specific to HIV nursing. In 2021, the ASHHNA Competency Standards have been modified into ASHHNA Practice Standards, to be utilised alongside the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Registered nurse standards for practice with the objective to provide a platform for practice development and advancement in sexual and reproductive health and HIV nursing.

The ASHHNA Practice Standards identify facets relating to nursing practice in this unique speciality area and may be used to:

- assist with training and development of nurses new to the speciality
- provide guidance for best practice for registered nurses employed in the speciality area
- provide a mechanism for the recording of individual performance and assessments
- assist in identification of individual learning needs
- guide peer review
- develop nursing training programs.

2021 EXPERT REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

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ASHHNA would also like to thank all members who have provided feedback and input into the development of the 2021 ASHHNA Practice Standards.

TERMINOLOGY

The ASHHNA Practice Standards separate and define Registered Nurse and Advanced Practice to inform the scope and depth of expertise required in reproductive health, sexual health (including blood-borne viruses) and HIV nursing specialties.

THE REGISTERED NURSE (RN)

A registered nurse is a *'person who has completed the prescribed education preparation, demonstrates competence to practise and is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as a registered nurse in Australia'* (Nursing and Midwifery Board, 2020).

ASHHNA acknowledges our organisational members includes midwives, however for the purpose of these Standards, they are encompassed within the Registered Nurse framework.

ADVANCED PRACTICE

'Nurses practising at an advanced practice level incorporate professional leadership, education, research and support of systems into their practice. Their practice includes relevant expertise, critical thinking, complex decision-making, autonomous practice and is effective and safe. They work within a generalist or specialist context and they are responsible and accountable in managing people who have complex healthcare requirements. Advanced practice in nursing is demonstrated by a level of practice and not by a job title or level of remuneration' (Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia, 2020).

In the Australian context, all RNs are expected to demonstrate a level of autonomous practice, to think critically, and possess and apply decision making and problem-solving skills. Nurses working at an advanced practice level demonstrate these attributes at a level beyond that of the RN and have progressed to this level through extensive clinical practice, developmental experiences, and completion of additional post-graduate education, rather than the length of time spent in a specialty area. Working as a RN in a specialty area or acquiring specific clinical skills does not constitute advanced practice (Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers, 2020).

BLOOD-BORNE VIRUSES (BBVS)

In the context of the ASHHNA Practice Standards, BBVs refers to any blood-borne virus that can be sexually transmitted i.e. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV 1, HIV 2, and Human T-lymphotropic virus 1 (HTLV-1). Education, prevention strategies and health promotion for sexually transmitted BBVs are core sexual health nursing skills. Comprehensive BBV care and management for BBVs other than HIV, for example hepatology nursing, is outside the scope of the ASHHNA Practice Standards.

CULTURAL SAFETY

In the context of the ASHHNA Practice Standards, cultural safety, first developed by the Nursing Council of New Zealand (2002), refers to registered nurses understanding their own cultures and ethnicities, being aware and acknowledging the unequal distribution of power within the Australian healthcare systems, being educated on the impact and trauma that Indigenous Australians have experienced from colonisation, and being able to provide care whereby those being cared for deem that their cultural needs are being met (Best and Fredericks, 2018).

The concept of cultural safety is also a core component of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) inclusive practice (Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria, 2015). Understanding the histories, specific safety needs and power imbalances experienced by LGBTI people, in relation to all aspects of their identities, (Crameri, Barrett, Latham and Whyte, 2017) is central to optimal standards of care in sexual and reproductive health and HIV nursing.

Standard 1: Thinks Critically and Analyses Nursing Practice

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Identifies the relevance of research and uses high quality evidence in practice to improve individual and community health outcomes.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to access and evaluate health information and research evidence.</p> <p>Participates in quality improvement programs and incorporates outcomes of quality improvement programmes at the local level.</p> <p>Participates in established research and development projects at the local level.</p> <p>Demonstrates a thorough working knowledge of legislation, professional standards and policy related to nursing practice.</p> <p>Makes clinical decisions within own level of competence and nursing scope of practice.</p> <p>Delivers non-judgemental, values-based care.</p> <p>Uses relevant evidence based SRH or BBV policy, guidelines, and operating procedures to guide assessment, care planning and decision making in clinical practice.</p> <p>Critiques own practice to seek opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>Demonstrates currency in specialist knowledge and skills for sexual and reproductive health and/or HIV nursing.</p> <p>Advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provides culturally safe care.</p> <p>Ensures equitable access to culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health and HIV resources and services.</p> <p>Educates others regarding issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and determinants in health in relation to SRH, HIV and blood-borne viruses.</p>	<p>Provides leadership and clinical governance in the co-ordination and implementation of quality improvement, auditing, and research activities.</p> <p>Critically evaluates existing research evidence and clinical data for relevance to practice and disseminates and incorporates into practice as appropriate.</p> <p>Encourages and promotes the use of evidence-based practice within the workplace.</p> <p>Initiates, conducts, and participates in clinical research to address gaps in service delivery in sexual and reproductive health and/or HIV nursing.</p> <p>Identifies funding opportunities for the development and implementation of projects/ programs to enhance service provision in sexual and reproductive health and/or for people with HIV.</p> <p>Serves as a consultant in improving client care and nursing practice based on expertise in sexual and reproductive health or HIV nursing.</p> <p>Promotes and influence others to incorporate non-judgemental, values-based care into practice.</p> <p>Assesses, leads, and manages clinical changes at local levels.</p> <p>Challenges and removes barriers to culturally safe sexual and reproductive health and HIV services.</p> <p>Develops models to promote access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>

Standard 2: Engages in Therapeutic and Professional Relationships

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Effectively uses therapeutic interactions considering language, disability comprehension using oral, pictorial, and written communication that is appropriate to individual client needs and their health literacy level.</p> <p>Works in collaboration with indigenous health workers, medical officers, gender specialists, allied health, peer support workers, case managers and interpreter services to optimise client-centred outcomes.</p> <p>Communicates appropriately, demonstrating sensitivity, awareness, and respect for clients within SRH, HIV and BBV priority population groups and the importance of confidentiality in client care.</p> <p>Practices in a way that acknowledges the dignity, culture, values, beliefs, and rights of individuals/ groups and respects the rights of the individual to make their own health care decisions and addresses the clients' needs.</p> <p>Demonstrates a working knowledge of how to access current resources regarding laws relating to sexual and reproductive health and HIV and advocates for individuals and groups at risk of or with blood-borne viruses, HIV or STIs at an organisational level.</p> <p>Establishes and maintains effective and collaborative communication within the multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>Works within scope of practice to plan and conduct nursing care in consultation with the multidisciplinary team to facilitate optimal client outcomes.</p> <p>Works collegially and shares knowledge within the multidisciplinary team through dissemination of information and in-service provision.</p> <p>Raises issues concerning professional practice.</p> <p>Promotes respectful relationships.</p> <p>Champions and respects social tolerance for sex positivity, sexual and gender diversity, and equity for all reproductive choices.</p> <p>Advocates for elimination of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice.</p> <p>Provides gender-affirming nursing care.</p>	<p>Provides expert advice and support to colleagues on effective communication in SRH and HIV nursing.</p> <p>Consults with governments, organisations and communities on legal, professional, and ethical issues relating to the specialty.</p> <p>Identifies key stakeholders and initiates partnerships to improve health outcomes for individuals and priority population groups through comprehensive assessment and referral, and targeted screening programs.</p> <p>Initiates effective communication strategies that promote positive multidisciplinary partnerships whilst acting as a senior member of the multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>Provides a safe learning environment and is an expert resource person in the specialty sharing advanced knowledge with colleagues.</p> <p>Demonstrates a working knowledge of how to access resources relating to HIV and sexual and reproductive health and advocates for individuals and groups at an organisational level.</p> <p>Provides supervision for colleagues and contributes to positive workplace culture.</p> <p>Ensures framework, resources and practices supporting professional supervision are provided within organisations.</p> <p>Ensures systems, policies and procedures are developed, implemented, and evaluated to support and enhance high quality, culturally safe communication.</p> <p>Ensures appropriate pathways are in place for referral to members of the multidisciplinary team and external care providers.</p> <p>Fosters an environment in which staff feel safe to question and discuss professional and practice issues and seek support and guidance.</p> <p>Demonstrates a working knowledge of legal issues to support and advocate for people with HIV within scope of practice.</p> <p>Appropriately informs clients of opportunities to take part in ethically approved nursing research relevant to their health.</p>

Standard 3: Maintains the Capability for Practice

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Applies current evidence-based practice to clinical care.</p> <p>Actively seeks out opportunities and resources for professional development.</p> <p>Contributes to the development of sexual and reproductive health and HIV knowledge through reflection on practice.</p> <p>Maintains a professional portfolio of evidence of recency of practice and continuing education.</p> <p>Participates in clinical teaching of students.</p> <p>Participates in continuing professional development activities including cultural safety training.</p> <p>Represents the nursing profession by participation on relevant committees, working groups or forums.</p> <p>Critically appraises and integrates evidence from a variety of sources to guide the provision of evidenced based practice.</p> <p>Engages with IT systems, promotes internet-based and telehealth services as alternative access points for clients and patients.</p> <p>Is aware of government and workplace digital health platforms and can disseminate this knowledge to provide informed decision making to their clients.</p>	<p>Role models expert clinical nursing practice in the specialty.</p> <p>Acts as a mentor to other nurses.</p> <p>Contributes to the clinical education and training of other health professionals.</p> <p>Interprets assessment data to manage episodes of care in partnership with other professionals.</p> <p>Acts as an experienced member and leader of the multidisciplinary team providing leadership and guidance to less experienced staff.</p> <p>Articulates and promotes the advanced sexual and reproductive health and HIV nursing role in clinical, political, and professional contexts.</p> <p>Leads quality improvement and research activities.</p> <p>Increases the profile of sexual and reproductive health and/or HIV nursing via professional forums.</p> <p>Demonstrates leadership in organisational change.</p> <p>Is actively involved in organisational and professional committees, working parties and forums related to the specialty.</p> <p>Undertakes tertiary level professional development.</p> <p>Actively involved in and leads regular performance reviews of self and others.</p>

Standard 4: Comprehensively Conducts Assessments

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Performs a comprehensive holistic assessment utilising culturally appropriate and evidence based SRH, HIV & BBV guidelines/assessment tools.</p> <p>Demonstrates non-judgmental care and actively reflects on own personal beliefs and attitudes around sexuality, gender identity, disability, pregnancy choices, mental health, and lifestyle.</p> <p>Maintains peoples' confidentiality and understands that privacy and data concerns are particularly important for persons with HIV and other potentially stigmatising conditions.</p> <p>Utilizes appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to obtain and document a relevant, focused client-centred medical, sexual, and social history to identify risks and priorities. Can undertake physical examination and assessment maintaining the clients' privacy, dignity, and safety.</p> <p>Assists the client in accessing and making decisions about their treatment options, ensuring informed consent, paying attention to health literacy and in a culturally safe manner.</p> <p>Recognises and responds appropriately when timely client-centred care is required.</p>	<p>Performs a thorough holistic assessment utilising culturally safe local, national, and international evidence based SRH, HIV & BBV guidelines/ assessment tools.</p> <p>Models non-judgmental care in their nursing assessments and actively engages in professional activities to challenge stigma and discrimination.</p> <p>Can ascertain likely clinical diagnoses, is aware of the long-time sequelae of treatment options, potential adverse events, and likely health outcomes.</p> <p>Assists the client to navigate the health system providing advocacy, as necessary.</p> <p>Understands the laws and legislation surrounding HIV, STIs, BBVs, pregnancy options, gender services, human rights, privacy, and anti-discrimination laws and directs clients towards resources, as necessary.</p> <p>Recognises and responds appropriately to provide essential and/or time critical interventions relating to SRH, STIs, HIV and BBVs.</p> <p>Supports nurses by disseminating contemporaneous research findings and local data to understand SRH, HIV and BBV related diseases, illnesses, and infections and uses this information to inform practice and policy change.</p> <p>Uses their leadership and expertise to advise, alert and give feedback at local, state, and national organisational levels regarding health-related inequity or barriers to SRH and/or, HIV care.</p> <p>Ensures that nurses are well supported to provide timely, equitable access and care and that nurses are knowledgeable about the most appropriate referral pathways.</p>

Standard 5: Develops a Plan for Nursing Practice

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Identifies needs of the client and contributes to development and implementation of care.</p> <p>Has effective communication skills to contribute to understanding of current nursing practice and planning.</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding of health promotion principles and participates in programmes to promote health and well-being.</p> <p>Articulates how the geographic, cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the local community may impact on the health of individuals.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to initiate discussion about STI/HIV/BBV prevention, transmission, implications of a positive result and contact tracing requirements.</p> <p>Articulates how the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in STI, HIV and BBV notification data impacts individual and community health and works with First Nations people and communities towards health promotion activities in a culturally safe manner.</p> <p>Utilises appropriate client resources to support preventative health decision making including contact tracing.</p> <p>Can comprehensively evaluate a client's needs and subsequent spectrum of care.</p> <p>Initiates discussion about preventative health checks and screening.</p> <p>Participates collaboratively in the development, delivery and evaluation of community and health professional education programmes and health promotion activities.</p> <p>Understands legal and ethical issues regarding care planning.</p> <p>Educates the client about peer support availability and role.</p>	<p>Articulates the use of different approaches to sexual and reproductive health and/or HIV health promotion to students and colleagues.</p> <p>Undertakes training needs analysis and plans interventions to implement and evaluate health promotion strategies.</p> <p>Initiates one-to-one skills building support as part of a care plan e.g., negotiating safer sex adherence skills, managing self-administration of medication and chronic disease management.</p> <p>Develops appropriate plans of care for more complex clients and ensures continuous monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Develops and evaluates client information resources.</p> <p>Develops, implements, and evaluates professional education programmes and resources.</p> <p>Works collaboratively with clients, community, external community services and health workers to improve needs for people with HIV and BBV.</p> <p>Has an awareness and understanding of health business models of care.</p> <p>Coordinates the delivery of care plans and provides feedback to support wider service planning.</p> <p>Has comprehensive knowledge regarding health resources and how to access these to inform and guide planning.</p> <p>Ability to initiate, contribute and evaluate quality improvement activities and research and successfully implement outcomes and findings.</p> <p>Has extensive knowledge regarding legalities and ethics when planning care and nursing practice.</p> <p>Is available as a resource to other nurses and other health providers including expert advice for other specialities.</p> <p>Actively engages in mentorship and preceptorship of peers.</p> <p>Has excellent communication skills and can articulate and explain contemporary nursing plans and practice to others.</p> <p>Develops, implements, and evaluates strategies for best practice which are evidenced based within nursing care.</p> <p>Leads, negotiates and influences models of care and service delivery.</p>

Standard 6: Provides Safe, Appropriate and Responsive Quality Nursing Practice

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Complies with nursing standards, codes, guidelines, legislation, and regulations.</p> <p>Articulates and practices within RN scope of practice and demonstrates awareness of appropriate delegation and when to seek support.</p> <p>Ensures client care is based on systematic assessment and appropriate management is formulated in partnership with the client utilising evidence driven models of care.</p> <p>Demonstrates accountability and responsibility for own actions.</p> <p>Advocates on behalf of the client to ensure consent to clinical procedures is informed and voluntary.</p> <p>Respects individual and group rights to make their own health care decisions.</p> <p>Practises in a way that acknowledges the dignity, culture, values, beliefs, and rights of individuals/groups.</p> <p>Recognises the distinctive rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and seeks to promote respect and understanding of these rights among colleagues and the broader community.</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of priority population groups and the issues relating to their sexual and reproductive health and HIV needs.</p> <p>Ensures privacy, dignity, cultural safety, and confidentiality when providing care.</p> <p>Demonstrates a working knowledge of laws relating to sexuality, reproductive health, gender, HIV & BBV.</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding and ethical preparedness to address issues that may impact an individual following diagnosis of HIV, blood-borne virus, or sexually transmitted infection.</p> <p>Recognises and responds appropriately to unsafe or unprofessional practice.</p> <p>Advocates for the rights of individuals and groups at an organisational level.</p> <p>Contributes to development and review of specialty practice standards and guidelines within the organisation.</p>	<p>Demonstrates comprehensive assessment skills to inform clients SRH needs, diagnosis when applicable and to determine appropriate client management and/or referral.</p> <p>Demonstrates and applies highly developed clinical decision-making skills in all aspects of client care.</p> <p>Evaluates treatments and interventions in accordance with client-centred outcomes and using local, national, and international clinical guidelines.</p> <p>Leads, collaborates, and influences models of care, service design and delivery.</p> <p>Initiates the development and review of specialty practice standards and guidelines relating to HIV, SRH and other STI/BBV.</p> <p>Produces and applies clinical evidence to build capacity in service provision whilst prioritising priority population group access.</p> <p>Identifies data necessary for inclusion in information systems necessary for nursing research and quality assurance projects.</p> <p>Initiates, contributes, and undertakes research and/or quality improvement initiatives relating to SRH, HIV, STIs and BBVs locally and/or nationally.</p> <p>Disseminates research findings and integrates outcomes and recommendations into service provision.</p> <p>Facilitates professional development opportunities for self and others.</p> <p>Provides clinical supervision and mentorship for colleagues.</p> <p>Influences health policy and practice through leadership and active participation in workplace and professional organisations.</p> <p>Consults with governments, organisations and communities on legal, professional, and ethical issues relating to HIV, sexual and reproductive health.</p> <p>Advocates for nursing within the specialty.</p> <p>Demonstrates reflective practice and develops this practice in others.</p>

Standard 7: Evaluates Outcomes to Inform Nursing Practice

REGISTERED NURSE	ADVANCED PRACTICE
<p>Plans and evaluates nursing care in consultation with clients and the multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>Assesses, develops, and revises HIV, sexual health, or sexual and reproductive health care plans, that facilitate health care interventions, which are without judgement and meet the clients' expectations of their identified healthcare needs.</p> <p>Initiates reviews of protocols and systems for clinical management and follow-up of clients with sexual and reproductive health needs and people with HIV.</p> <p>Contributes to the development of nursing knowledge and skills through reflection on practice, including reflection on own cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity and provision of culturally safe care.</p> <p>Integrates evidence-based practice from relevant HIV, sexual and reproductive health resources to guide the provision of care.</p> <p>Participates in evaluations of local audits, research, quality improvement initiative and processes.</p>	<p>Performs a thorough holistic assessment utilising culturally safe local, national, and international evidence based SRH, HIV & BBV guidelines/ assessment tools.</p> <p>Models non-judgmental care in their nursing assessments and actively engages in professional activities to challenge stigma and discrimination.</p> <p>Can ascertain likely clinical diagnoses, is aware of the long-time sequelae of treatment options, potential adverse events, and likely health outcomes.</p> <p>Assists the client to navigate the health system providing advocacy, as necessary.</p> <p>Understands the laws and legislation surrounding HIV, STIs, BBVs, pregnancy options, gender services, human rights, privacy, and anti-discrimination laws and directs clients towards resources, as necessary.</p> <p>Recognises and responds appropriately to provide essential and/or time critical interventions relating to SRH, STIs, HIV and BBVs.</p> <p>Supports nurses by disseminating contemporaneous research findings and local data to understand SRH, HIV and BBV related diseases, illnesses, and infections and uses this information to inform practice and policy change.</p> <p>Uses their leadership and expertise to advise, alert and give feedback to local, state, and national level regarding health-related inequity or barriers to SRH and/or, HIV care.</p> <p>Ensures that nurses are well supported to provide timely, equitable access and care and that nurses are knowledgeable about the most appropriate referral pathways.</p>

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