



LPN Decision-Making Tool

Part 2: Assignment of Care

This is the second in a three-part series of LPN decision making tools. The first part (*Practice*, May 2019) focused on scope of practice, and the third (*Practice*, January 2020) will focus on independence and collaboration in practice.

WHO SHOULD DO THAT?

Assignment of care is the outcome of a dynamic decision-making process to determine the most appropriate care provider to be responsible for client care. Assignment of care requires an evaluation, and an adjustment, or re-assignment when necessary, when there are changes in client acuity, complexity or predictability. Factors that influence the decisions around assignment of care include a reflection of the nurse, the client, and the environment.

- The Nurse:** The care to be provided must fall within the competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) of the nurse, and the nurse must be able to manage the outcomes of the care they are to provide. Knowledge may have been acquired through entry-to-practice education or continuing (post-basic) education. Skill and ability are attained through practice experience.
- Two LPNs may have different practice experiences, and different degrees of proficiency, yet both may be competent to provide the required care safely.
- The Client:** Understanding client care needs includes considering the established plan of care, and the complexity of the client's health status. LPNs independently provide care for clients where plans are established, and outcomes are predictable. LPNs collaborate to provide care for clients where outcomes are less predictable.
- The Environment:** The consideration of environment includes the availability of resources to support the LPN in providing care, such as policies, procedures, or directives to guide decision making. Resources may also include the availability of other professionals for consultation or intervention.

As self-regulated professionals, LPNs are responsible and accountable for the care they provide, for recognizing changes in client status, for communicating appropriately within the care team, and for seeking consultation, assistance or intervention where required.

Assignment versus Delegation

The terms *assignment* and *delegation* are not interchangeable; they have different meanings and responsibilities. Care is assigned when that care is authorized to be within the scope of practice of the profession¹. If the care to be provided is not within the scope of practice for the profession it cannot be assigned. *Delegation* is a formal process to provide authority for an LPN to carry out an activity for which they are, or can be educated to competently perform, but which is not currently authorized by CLPNNL to be within the scope of practice of the profession (e.g., care of a client requiring mechanical ventilation). The process to establish a delegation of function is outlined in Appendix B of the CLPNNL Competency Profile (available on the CLPNNL website).

¹ The scope of practice of the profession for LPNs in Newfoundland and Labrador is outlined in the CLPNNL Competency Profile.
