



# Public Statements by Registered Psychiatric Nurses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

*March 2021*

The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented strain on our health system, and Registered Psychiatric Nurses have been at the forefront of that response for over a year. As public health measures continue to evolve and are required to mitigate the spread and impacts of the virus, it is essential that all RPNs consider their professional responsibilities when making public statements on this important topic.

Because Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) hold a position of leadership and trust within the health system and the community, any statements RPNs make in public forums or on social media have the potential to influence the public and to be taken as an expression of professional views or advice.

As such, RPNs are expected to practise in accordance with the Entry Level Competencies, Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, any applicable practice directions, and the Code of Ethics. These expectations include, but are not limited to:

- Critically reflecting on and integrating the best current evidence from various sources (e.g., published research, clinical practice guidelines, policies, decision-making tools)
- Conducting oneself in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, reliability, impartiality, and diligence;
- Conducting oneself in a manner that promotes a positive image of the profession at the local, community, provincial, and national levels;
- Advocating for fair and equitable access to services and benefits and for equal treatment and protection of all persons;
- Practicing according to provincial and federal statutes/acts/regulation/by-laws and the Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice; and
- Understanding, promoting, and upholding the ethical values of the profession.
- Using technology, electronic communication and social media responsibly and professionally.

The CRPNM strongly encourages all RPNs to reflect on these and all related professional obligations (including any applicable workplace policies) before engaging in a public forum, and to avoid expressing views that are not supported by evidence such as anti-masking or anti-vaccine viewpoints.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses collaborate in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, procedures and activities that promote quality care and client safety. As such, it is possible to participate in the ongoing dialogue to suggest improvements to the current pandemic response without contributing to the distribution of scientifically unreliable or inaccurate information that is harmful to the public interest. Any reports of such conduct that are brought to the CRPNM's attention may be subject to further investigation or steps to ensure accountability.

**Additional Links:**

Code of Ethics and Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice:

<https://crpnm.mb.ca/members/standards-and-legislation/standards-and-code-of-ethics/>

Practice Guidelines:

<https://crpnm.mb.ca/members/practice-resources/practice-guidelines/>

Shared Health Manitoba: COVID-19 Resources for Health Providers:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/>

Public Health Agency of Canada: COVID-19 Vaccination Tool Kit for Health Care Providers:

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases-maladies/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/covid-19-healthcare-professionals-vaccine-toolkit.pdf>

World Health Organization: How to report misinformation online:

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/how-to-report-misinformation-online>

*This publication is available in alternate formats on request*



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