



Scope and Standards of Practice for Cannabis Nurses American Cannabis Nurses Association

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Disclaimer: Nurses must be aware that cannabis and most cannabinoids are federally illegal. They must also be knowledgeable about their state's delineated scope of nursing practice, and consider the legal status of cannabis in the given state where the practice. ACNA is not responsible for individual nurse interpretation or misuse of the document

**Introduction:**

This document is intended to define and articulate the scope and standards of practice of the emerging role of the cannabis nurse in the United States. The scope of any specialized nursing practice describes the who, what, where, when, how, and why of that specific nursing specialty practice (American Nurses Association, (ANA), 2015a), while encompassing the nursing process and professional performance requirements of nurses. The standards of any specialty area of nursing are built upon the foundation of standards of practice expected of all registered nurses (Mariano, 2015) and cannabis nursing is no exception to this rule.

Definitions:

Cannabis: The preferred designation of the flowering herbal plant species *cannabis sativa* L., belonging to the genus Cannabis L., which belongs to the Cannabaceae family (United States Department of Agriculture, nd). Commonly known as “marijuana.”

Environment: The surrounding milieu, habitat, conditions, and context in which beings participate and interact: Inclusive of the external physical space and habitat, as well as the cultural, psychological, social, and historical influences. Additionally, the individual’s internal physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences are aspects of the environment (ANA, 2015a).

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP): The use of the best well-designed and valid research evidence, integrative-healing philosophies, personal experience,, clinical expertise, and patient preferences to guide one’s nursing decision making processes and practices (ANA, 2015a: Mariano, 2015). Use of EBP leads to the nurse making the best clinical decisions and the resultant positive healthcare outcomes (ANA, 2015a).

Healing: The act or process of restoring health or curing; the process of becoming well; tending to heal or cure (Merriam Webster Medical Dictionary, 2017a). Healing involves the physical, mental, spiritual, and social processes that support recovery, repair, renewal, and transformation of the self toward integration, balance, wholeness, and coherence (Mariano, 2015).

Health: An experience defined in terms of the continuum between wellness and illness in the presence or absence of disease or illness (ANA, 2015a); an individually defined state in



which the person experiences well-being, harmony, and unity (Mariano, 2015);

Health or Wellness -Illness Continuum: The absence or presence of illness or disease does not adequately define health or wellness. Rather, individuals can move along a continuum toward greater wellness and health status, as they pass through the stages of awareness, education, and growth (Travis & Ryan, 2004).

Homeostasis: The maintenance of relatively stable internal physiological conditions and processes in response to fluctuating internal and environmental conditions (Merriam Webster Medical Dictionary, 2017b).

Human Caring: The guiding moral idea of nursing; human attempt to connect with others in order to protect, enhance, preserve, human dignity and humanity with integrity as one supports a person toward finding meaning in illness, suffering, pain, and existence (ANA, 2015a; Watson, 2012).

Nurse: For the purposes of this document, nurse is defined as a registered nurse who has the educational background and experience to be licensed by a state or regulatory body to practice the art and science of nursing (ANA, 2015a). The terms “nurse”, “registered nurse”, and “professional nurse” are all used interchangeably within this document in alignment with this same definition.

Patient: The consumer of healthcare: may be a person, family, community or population who received the nurse’s professional services (ANA, 2015a).

Stakeholder: Stakeholders are those entities that are integrally involved in the healthcare system. They include but are not limited to: patients, nurses, physicians, employers, insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms, government and regulating bodies, and, at the time of this writing, cannabis cultivators and cannabis medicine dispensaries.

Overarching Philosophical Principles

The cannabis nurse applies a guiding philosophy of caring for patients during patient-centered encounters. Cannabis nursing is both a learned skill and a practiced art, where the cannabis nurse builds expertise upon previous experiences with healing and nursing while enacting reflective practices to support growth toward expertise. The cannabis nurse



aims to not only support and educate patients, but also works toward supporting wellness and healing through a caring presence, which supports the patient’s needs. Cannabis nursing requires that the nurse be educated in multiple areas above and beyond all registered nurse competencies, including cannabis therapeutics, advocacy, ethics, and the law. The cannabis nurse is a leader in supporting patients toward wellness and health as they support patients toward a maximal state of homeostasis. The cannabis nurse practices self-care to maintain a professional and caring presence with patients.

Core values:

Evidenced-Based practice: Cannabis nurses remain up-to-date on current scientific evidence regarding the use of cannabis to treat specific illness states or support wellness with patients or populations.

Application of caring and justice-based ethics: The cannabis nurse is familiar with the ethical considerations related to nursing practice and they practice from a platform of ethics of care and justice-based ethics.

Patient-centered care: The cannabis nurse recognizes that patients are at the center of their own care. The cannabis nurse supports patients in their autonomy and freedom to partner with others in determining their own plan of care.

Interdisciplinary Team Work:

The cannabis nurse is an integral member of the interdisciplinary team. The interdisciplinary team is characterized by a high degree of collaboration and communication among the health professionals caring for an individual that, together, develop a comprehensive treatment plan to address the biological, psychological, and social needs of the patient.

Holistic Based Practice: The cannabis nurse considers patients’ holistic needs (body, mind, spirit) when designing plans of care. The nurse is cognizant that in addition to supporting patient’s use of cannabis for health and healing, the nurse is also obligated to promote the patient’s knowledge of endocannabinoid system function and the ability to create homeostasis; therefore evidence-based use of holistic-integrative modalities should be utilized as needed.



Standards of Care: Nursing Process Components

Standard 1: Assessment

The nurse collects relevant patient data related to the patient's healthcare needs and concerns.

Competencies

Throughout the ongoing assessment process, the cannabis nurse:

1. Collects assessment data that may include, but is not limited to, data regarding physiology of disease processes, spiritual/transpersonal, psychosocial, mental, emotional, sexual, age-developmental, economic, and cultural concerns. The collection of data is an ongoing process that is performed with compassion, caring, and respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each human's needs.
2. Works with patients to determine their values, preferences, needs, and knowledge base related to both health, wellness, illness, and cannabis use.
3. Establishes a trusting relationship that promotes and creates a caring atmosphere for patients, family, and significant others.
4. Recognizes the impact of the nurse's own cannabis--related attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs on the assessment process.
5. Assesses the influence of the family/ support system dynamics related to the patient's own health and use of cannabis.
6. Prioritizes data collection based on patient's own health condition(s) and expressed concerns.
7. Utilizes evidence-based assessment techniques to identify patient health patterns.
8. Applies ethical, legal, and privacy guidelines and policies throughout the data collection process, inclusive of data maintenance, use, and dissemination.
9. Honors patient preferences, while recognizing the patient's authority regarding their own health.
10. Gathers specific historical and current data regarding patient's knowledge of and experience with cannabis.
11. Documents data gathered in a secure HIPPA-compliant manner.

Standard 2: Diagnosis



The cannabis nurse analyzes assessment data to formulate appropriate potential and actual nursing diagnoses, problems, and/or issues related to health, wellness, disease, or illness and cannabis.

Competencies

The cannabis nurse:

1. Derives the nursing diagnoses based on the data gathered from and with the patient and other appropriate sources.
2. Identifies actual or potential risks to the patient’s health, well-being, and safety.
3. Verifies the diagnoses, problems, and issues with the patient, family, group, community, and population.
4. Shares nursing diagnostic information with other interdisciplinary healthcare professional colleagues as needed.
5. Establishes goals with patients across the health continuum.
6. Works with the cannabis patient to prioritize goals around medicinal cannabis use.
7. Considers the patient’s holistic and other healing needs as related to the endocannabinoid system health and optimal functioning.
8. Documents diagnoses, problems, and/or issues in manner so that outcomes can be evaluated.

Standard 3: Outcomes Identification

The cannabis nurse clearly identifies expected outcomes for an individualized plan related to the patient’s or population’s unique situation.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Works with the patient, family, and interdisciplinary healthcare team members to determine desired goals and outcomes. The patient remains at the center of the process.
2. Defines the outcomes as related to the patient’s values, beliefs, age, preferences, while considering ethical concerns, spiritual practices and preferences, environment.
3. Integrates the most relevant available cannabis science evidence/ related scientific evidence given the patient’s or population’s concerns.
4. Considers the best cannabis nurse practices.
5. Weighs the risks, benefits, and costs related to attaining the intended outcomes.
6. Generates a time frame for expected outcomes.
7. Modifies outcomes based on ongoing evaluation of the plan.
8. Documents expected outcomes and actual outcomes.

Standard 4: Planning

The cannabis nurse develops a plan that outlines strategies to attain expected outcomes.



Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. In partnership with the patient, develops a plan that considers values, beliefs, spirituality, health practices, preferences, choices, age, cultural relevance, and environmental concerns.
2. In conjunction with patient, family, and other clinicians and concerned persons develops a plan for incorporation of appropriate use of cannabis therapeutics and modalities that support optimal functioning of the endocannabinoid system.
3. Builds upon established trusting-caring relationship to explore alternative and integrative options for healing.
4. Includes evidence-based strategies to address established issues, diagnoses and problems.
5. Develops a plan for implementation.
6. Identifies costs and financial implications with patient, family, and significant others.
7. Modifies plan to address ongoing assessment and patient responses to cannabis use.
8. Provides health education, teaching, and promotion as needed to support the patient's healthcare team.
9. Coordinates implantation of the plan.

Standard 5: Implementation

The cannabis nurse supports the patient in implementation of the plan of care.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Partners with patient, family, and significant others to implement the plan in a safe and timely manner.
2. Utilizes inter-professional resources to support patient's achievement of outcomes.
3. Provides an ongoing presence as implementation data is gathered.
4. Modifies cannabis care plan based on ongoing assessment of effectiveness of implementation strategies.
5. Supports patient with ongoing educational needs.
6. Coordination of care is provided by the cannabis nurse as needed to achieve cannabis related outcomes.
7. Health teaching and health promotion strategies are implemented to support patient's ongoing educational needs related to wellness and possible adverse effects of cannabis care plan implementation.
8. Monitors patient or population for adverse effects related to the use of cannabis or related to the implementation plan.
9. Engages cannabis patient alliance and advocacy groups in health teaching and health



promotion activities.

10. Documents implementation process.

Standard 6: Evaluation

The cannabis nurse evaluates progress toward attaining outcomes.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Evaluates the plan, implementation process, and outcomes achievement as prescribed by the indicated timeline.
2. In conjunction with the patient or population, evaluates the effectiveness of the planned strategies as related to unique patient or population responses in efforts to reach goals.
3. Uses ongoing assessment and evaluation data to revise cannabis nursing plan of care, including diagnoses, outcomes, plans, and implementation strategies.
4. Documents findings and results of the evaluation process.

Standards of Professional Performance

Standard 7: Ethics and Advocacy

The cannabis nurse practices ethically.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Utilizes the *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretative statements* (ANA, 2015b) to guide practice, while establishing and maintaining an ethical environment of nursing care.
2. Practices cannabis nursing with compassion, caring, respect, and in acknowledgement of the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of all persons.
3. Advocates for patients, populations, and consumers' rights regarding informed decision making and self-determination in relation to cannabis as a medicine.
4. Understands that their primary commitment is to the patients and populations they serve.
5. Maintains therapeutic-caring relationships and professional boundaries.
6. Safeguards cannabis patients' rights to healthcare privacy.
7. Maintains ongoing cannabis nursing competence through professional and personal educational and development opportunities.
8. Demonstrates ongoing commitment to self-reflection and self-care practices.
9. Collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights and reduce health disparities.



10. Enacts personal and nursing core values to maintain integrity of cannabis nursing practice.

Standard 8: Culturally Congruent Practice

The cannabis nurse practices in a manner that is congruent with cultural diversity and principles of inclusion.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse

1. Participates in lifelong learning to ensure understanding of diverse patients' cultural preferences, world views, and choices and how these impact patients' decision making processes.
2. Considers the effects and impacts of discrimination and oppression on cannabis nurse practice within vulnerable diverse populations.
3. Advocates for cannabis policies that promote health and prevent harm among culturally diverse, under-served, vulnerable, or under-represented patients and populations.
4. Promotes equal access to medicinal cannabis services.
5. Educates nurse colleagues and other healthcare professionals about the intersection between medicinal cannabis and diverse population needs.

Standard 9: Communication

The cannabis nurse communicates effectively in all areas of practice.

Competencies:

Cannabis nurses:

1. Assess their own communication skills and communication effectiveness.
2. Demonstrate cultural empathy when communicating with patients.
3. Use communication methods that demonstrate caring, respect, deep listening, authenticity, and trust.
4. Maintain communication with interdisciplinary team as needed to ensure continuity of care.
5. Convey accurate information regarding medicinal use of cannabis.
6. Disclose concerns related to potential or actual hazards or safety issues related to medicinal cannabis use.
7. Apply HIPPA-compliant, ethical, legal, and privacy guidelines and policies throughout the communication process, inclusive of information maintenance, use, and dissemination.

Standard 10: Collaboration



The cannabis nurse collaborates with patients, families, clinicians, populations, and key stakeholders.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Identifies areas of cannabis expertise and contributions of other professionals and key stakeholders.
2. Clearly articulates the cannabis nurse role with other healthcare team members.
3. Partners with cannabis patients and key stakeholders to advocate for change that supports positive healthcare outcomes and enhanced quality of care.
4. Exhibits dignity, respect, and professionalism when interacting with others and giving and receiving feedback.
5. Shares cannabis knowledge with peers and colleagues in a professional manner.

Standard 11: Leadership

The cannabis nurse provides leadership within professional practice settings.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Contributes to the evolution of professional medicinal cannabis nursing through participation in professional organizations, including but not limited to ACNA.
2. Influences cannabis policy processes that promote health and ensure patient safety and well-being.
3. Mentors other cannabis nurses toward the advancement of cannabis nursing practice.
4. Acts as a professional role model for other nurses and healthcare professionals.

Standard 12: Education

The cannabis nurse seeks knowledge and competence that reflects current cannabis nursing practices and promotes futuristic and innovative thinking.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Regularly participates in educational activities related to cannabis nursing and inter-professional knowledge bases.
2. Demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning inclusive of self-reflection and inquiry for personal and professional growth.
3. Acquires knowledge and skills related to the role of the cannabis nurse.
4. Shares educational findings, experiences, and ideas with peers.

Standard 13: Evidence-Based Practice and Research



The cannabis nurse integrates current best evidence and research findings into practice.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Articulates the importance and value of cannabis-science-based research and its application with patients and populations.
2. Uses current evidence-based knowledge to guide cannabis nursing practice and decision making processes.
3. Participates in the building of the body of cannabis-related scientific evidence and contributes to the emerging field of cannabis research and therapeutics science.
4. Promotes ethical practices and principles within cannabis research efforts.

Standard 14: Quality of Practice

The nurse contributes to quality cannabis nursing practices.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Recommends strategies to improve quality of care for cannabis patients.
2. Collects data to ensure quality of cannabis nursing practice.
3. Provides critical review of policies, procedures, and guidelines which impact cannabis patients and nurses.
4. Documents cannabis nursing practice in a way that supports quality and performance improvement.

Standard 15: Professional Practice Evaluation

The cannabis nurse evaluates their own and other's cannabis nursing practices.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Regularly engages in self-reflection and self-evaluation of cannabis nurse practice.
2. Adheres to *The Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice* (ANA, 2015a) and *The Code of Ethics for Nurse With Interpretive Statements* (ANA, 2015b).
3. Seeks formal and informal evaluation and feedback from cannabis patients, colleagues, and others.
4. Provides other cannabis nurses with formal and informal constructive feedback regarding their practice and role performance.

Standard 16: Resource Utilization

The cannabis nurse utilizes available resources to plan, provide, and sustain evidence-based nursing services.



Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Assists the cannabis patient in factoring costs, risks, and benefits in decisions about care.
2. Assists the patient in identifying and procuring traditional medical therapies, holistic services, and integrative medicinal technologies as appropriate to support their healing processes.
3. Integrates telehealth and mobile health technologies when appropriate to promote positive interactions with cannabis patients.
4. Uses community resources to support and implement inter-professional plans and educational efforts.

Standard 17: Environmental Health

The cannabis nurse supports an environmentally healthy and safe atmosphere.

Competencies:

The cannabis nurse:

1. Creates a safe and healthy workplace environment.
2. Reduces environmental health risks to self, cannabis patients, and colleagues.
3. Uses products or treatments consistent with evidence-based practices to decrease environmental threats.

Summary

The cannabis nurse works in a variety of settings with patients and their support systems to facilitate health, healing, and well-being through the patient’s safe and effective use of cannabis and endocannabinoid system optimal functioning. The cannabis nurse is educated on the use of cannabis as medicine and current cannabis scientific findings; therefore, the cannabis nurse is able to educate patients, their caregivers or support systems, and other healthcare providers around the most effective and safe uses of cannabis for specific health, healing, and illness concerns. The cannabis nurse upholds the highest ethical standards, and advocates for patients and populations.



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