



# Papua New Guinea Specialist Nursing Competency Standards Child Health

**1st Edition, September 2003**

Papua New Guinea Nursing  
Council

PO BOX 841, Port Moresby  
NCD

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## Introduction

The health status of women and children in Papua New Guinea is poor in relation to the rest of the world, and the worst of all the Pacific Island countries. Mortality rates are high, with estimates of maternal mortality being 320 per 100,000 births (0.32%), infant mortality being 82 /1000 (8%) and under 5s mortality being 40/1000 (4%). The major causes of mortality in mothers are related to pregnancy and childbirth complications (1). Infants and children are dying from conditions that are considered preventable with the most common problems being acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, measles and malaria (2).

One strategy the government has recommended to address maternal mortality is a need for approximately 435 midwives (3). The need for paediatric nurses is recognised but to what extent is unclear (4) – but has been estimated to be about 200.

The School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), Taurama Campus is currently the only education institution that conducts post graduate nurse training in the country. Approximately 20 midwives and 20 paediatric nurses graduate annually. The output of graduates from these courses is not meeting the demand and the shortfall is growing constantly.

In order to meet the shortfall it is proposed that additional midwifery and child health courses be conducted at the University of Goroka; the Lutheran School of Nursing, Madang; St Mary's School of Nursing, Kopo; and Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby.

To ensure graduates from any post basic midwifery and child health courses are able to practice in accordance with the PNG Nursing Council, it was necessary to develop specialist competency standards for nurses in PNG.

In March 2003 a workshop was convened by Human Resource Management (HRM), funded by Women and Children's Health Project, to produce this first draft of PNG Nurse Specialist Competency Standards. Participants represented the Nursing Council of PNG, Community and Hospital services, urban health clinics, Nurse Administrators and Nurse Teachers in certificate and diploma programs.

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## PNG Nurse Specialist Competency Standards

The Nurse Specialist Competency Standards for Papua New Guinea are set out in seven areas of nursing practice under 'domains'. These are: Professional and Ethical Practice, Critical Thinking and Analysis, Communication, Management of Care, Public Health and Health Promotion, and Partnership with Community and Services. The seven domains are retained from the generic competency standards. Under each domain the standards for practice are separated into 10 Competencies each for both Specialist Nurse Midwife and Paediatric/Child Health level of competence. Each competency is divided again into smaller parts called elements. The performance criteria of each element are used to evaluate whether or not the standard has been reached.

The Code of Ethics identifies the morals of the profession and provides nurses with a basis for self-reflection as a professional, and a guide to ethical practice. The Code of Professional Conduct identifies the minimum requirements for nursing practice and clarifies professional and unprofessional conduct of professional nurses in question.

The Nurse Specialist Competency Standards together with the Code of Ethics and the Code of Professional Conduct provide a framework for professional nursing practice and education in this country.

*“Nursing is a service  
which is authorised  
and valued by  
society.”*



## Development of Professional Nursing Practice Standards

The first drafts of PNG Nursing Specialist Competency Standards, Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct were circulated for your comments and additions. The comments and suggestions received were incorporated in second drafts, and a small group met and finalised the documents for the first edition of the Papua New Guinea Specialist Nursing Competency Standards.

## Adaptation of Professional Specialist Nursing Competency Standards

The PNG Specialist Nursing Competency Standards, Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct are based on the work of our nurses who developed the first edition of the PNG Nursing Competency Standards for First Level Registered Nurses.

*“Nursing is an  
art and a science.”*

## Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

The functions of professional nursing standards are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform the community of the standards of practice, values and conduct expected of nurses;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For rationalising the workforce;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To communicate professional nursing standards to others providing health and related services;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess continuing fitness to practice;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by nurses and the complex nature of nursing activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess nurses who wish to return to work after being away from the workforce for a defined period;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For nurses' self-assessment in daily practice;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess nurses who completed nursing courses outside Papua New Guinea;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For ongoing appraisal of staff and workplace performance;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide the basis for developing competencies in specialty nursing areas;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For planning continuing education, staff development and in service courses;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For nursing curriculum development and academic assessment;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that graduates from accredited programs in various institutions can demonstrate nursing competency standards to become registered as nurses.</li> </ul>	



*“The nurse practices independently and inter-dependently in accordance with professional standards, and employs a problem-solving approach in practice.”*

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Professional and Ethical Practice

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 1</b>	
<b>Practices child health nursing in accord with relevant legislation, common and customary law.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Recognizes common and customary laws and upholds the law governing child health practice with positive contributions to health outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulates knowledge of policies that have legal implications for practice.</li> <li>• Recognises and/or reports potential and/or actual protection issues of child abuse/domestic violence in accordance with legislative requirements.</li> <li>• Provides a family with accurate information to allow them to give informed consent.</li> <li>• Fulfils the duty of care in the course of practice.</li> <li>• Practices within the parameters of described laws governing child health, policies and relevant legislation of employing agencies/ institutions.</li> <li>• Maintains documentation and records required by legislation.</li> </ul>

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 2</b>	
<b>Provides nursing service in accord with ethical standards and practice codes of the nursing profession.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Values and respect all people regardless of place of origin, race, politics, status, role, gender, culture, belief system and/or behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices according to the code of ethics.</li> <li>• Practices according to the code of conduct.</li> <li>• Advocates on behalf of the child to uphold their rights.</li> <li>• Advocates on behalf of the family in the best interest of the child.</li> <li>• Informs the family of unsafe cultural and spiritual practices that could have detrimental effects on the health of the child.</li> </ul>

## Critical Thinking and Analysis

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 3</b>	
<b>Accepts accountability and responsibility for own actions and outcomes and acts to enhance child health practices.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Uses professional standards of practice to assess the performance of self and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices within the boundaries of a specialist child health nurse to provide safe care to child and family.</li> <li>• Meets specialist competency standards for child health nurses in roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Provides documented evidence to show level of performance is in line with the expected specialist competency standards.</li> <li>• Identifies areas for further development and sets goals for the future.</li> </ul>

## Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

<p>2. Acts with professional responsibility and accountability of self.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects on self and practice to identify areas for personal and professional growth.</li> <li>• Participates in learning opportunities for self and keeps up to date with new developments in the specific area of practice.</li> <li>• Provides evidence of own continuing education.</li> <li>• Uses professional set standards of practice to assess performance of self.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Promotes the role and functions of a child health nurse within the profession and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates to child health nurse and other health professionals the role and function of the specialist child health nurse.</li> <li>• Promotes the professional image of the specialist child health nurse to other health care disciplines and the community.</li> <li>• Participates in policy development in relation to the provision of specialist child health services.</li> <li>• Develops networks locally, nationally and internationally to source up to date child health information from a range of sources eg. UNICEF, Save the Children (NZ).</li> </ul>

### Communication

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 4      Communicates effectively to support client through the health care experience.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
<p>1. Communicates effectively using formal and informal channels of communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks to children and parents/guardians in language they are familiar with.</li> <li>• Demonstrates effective communication skills and techniques, and refers where appropriate.</li> <li>• Advocates for the child and family to express feelings and talk about concerns in a variety of ways.</li> <li>• Confirms that the formal message that is delivered is understood eg. action of recipient shows this (see a change).</li> <li>• Clarifies and confirms informal information before acting.</li> <li>• Utilises strategies to assist understanding for child and family eg. flip charts, interpreters, video, pamphlets etc.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Interacts sensitively with others irrespective of status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies verbal and non-verbal cues that indicate needs.</li> <li>• Acts on verbal and non-verbal cues given out by others including media.</li> <li>• Treats all with respect.</li> </ul>

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<p>3. Disseminates child health education information and material to inform child, family and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporates current child health education into schools and clinic visits.</li> <li>• Works with communities and groups eg. women, youth, church groups.</li> <li>• Liaises with all levels of government to ensure availability of relevant child health information.</li> <li>• Seeks feedback from child, family and communities.</li> </ul>
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## Management and Leadership

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 5      Manages material and human resources appropriately.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
<p>1. Uses information from current PNG National Health Plan and Minimum Standards to plan child health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges the existence of NHP and Minimum Standards for Health Services in PNG.</li> <li>• Uses relevant data from PNG National Health Plan and Minimum Standards for Health Services in PNG related to child health issues to identify needs and priorities.</li> <li>• Participates in formulating annual plan based on needs and priorities in PNG National Health Plan and Minimum Standards for Health Services in PNG with emphasis on child health issues.</li> <li>• Uses the NHP as the basis for all decisions related to the provision of child health services.</li> <li>• Initiates action plan to improve child health outcomes based on NHP and Minimum Standards for Health Services in PNG.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Uses available resources cost effectively to achieve maximum child health outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in evaluating achievement of goals/objectives and cost containment.</li> <li>• Provides in-service education to facilitate cost-effective use of resources.</li> <li>• Participates in the development of the budget process.</li> <li>• Allocates resources for child health programmes based on NHP priorities and Minimum Standards for Health Services in PNG.</li> <li>• Utilises health information unit to gather child health information statistics to guide child health service planning.</li> </ul>

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<p>3. Provides leadership role in child health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides clinical supervision (preceptorship) to other health workers to promote child health priorities.</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for assessing competency standards of specialist student nurses.</li> <li>• Identifies the needs of other health workers and assists them to develop strategies to address these.</li> <li>• Updates health workers when national child health policies and practices change in PNG.</li> <li>• Informs other health care workers when new initiatives related to child health services are implemented.</li> <li>• Facilitates in-service education of others through a range of activities.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Provides management role to deliver optimal child health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses data to alert authorities to epidemics.</li> <li>• Participates in the completion of performance appraisals on all health workers under their supervision.</li> <li>• Utilises staff to provide child health services as planned.</li> <li>• Acts to support two way communications.</li> <li>• Provides an environment that promotes an open door policy for staff.</li> <li>• Acts as a role model to others in conflict resolution.</li> <li>• Directs staff and clients to specialists and other agencies that can assist with improving child health outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Participates in research to ensure child health practice is evidence based.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses literature to support practice based on evidence.</li> <li>• Uses research information to guide practice.</li> <li>• Collects and analyses data to improve child health outcomes.</li> <li>• Acts as a resource person to assist others in conducting child health research.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Uses professional standards of practice to assess the performance of others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilises relevant competency standards for health workers to measure performance outcomes in child health services delivery.</li> <li>• Provides feedback to others about their performance against recognised set standards.</li> <li>• Identifies areas for improvement of clinical practice and implements relevant quality assurance activities.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Management of Care

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 6</b>	
<b>Promotes environment which maximises safety, independence, quality of life and health for children, families and health workers.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Promotes a safe health care environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervenes on behalf of child and family when any of the above factors may be compromised.</li> <li>• Conducts in-service education to promote these factors.</li> <li>• Uses initiative to provide safe care when expected equipment is not available.</li> <li>• Demonstrates knowledge of growth and development issues related to the provision of a safe environment for children.</li> <li>• Provides a supportive environment for families to facilitate their participation in care.</li> <li>• Encourages and supports self-care by the child where appropriate.</li> <li>• Recognises the importance of play and provides/facilitates age specific toys and activities.</li> <li>• Acknowledges the child's need for comfort and security objects eg. security blanket and specific toys.</li> <li>• Ensures safety of self and other health workers.</li> </ul>
2. Promotes improving health outcomes for children through immunisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors children to ensure immunisations are administered according to PNG immunisation policy.</li> <li>• Administers immunisations at every opportunity to children identified as having incomplete course.</li> <li>• Monitors overall immunisation coverage rates and takes steps to improve.</li> <li>• Takes steps to ensure immunisation rates of children are increased annually until 95% coverage achieved.</li> </ul>
3. Acts as an independent practitioner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs specialist diagnostic procedures.</li> <li>• Performs emergency procedures to preserve life in line with advanced knowledge and skills in the absence of a doctor.</li> <li>• Assesses condition of patient and prescribes medication according to legislation.</li> </ul>



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<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 7</b>	
<b>Carries out comprehensive and accurate nursing assessment of clients/groups in a variety of settings.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Analyses and interprets data correctly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses data to develop plan of management.</li> <li>• Provides immediate interventions as necessary based on findings.</li> <li>• Documents findings accurately.</li> <li>• Monitors documentation of others in the health care team to ensure accuracy.</li> <li>• Acts as a role model in interpreting data gathered from a range of techniques.</li> </ul>

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 8</b>	
<b>Uses a problem solving framework to achieve identified outcomes within the scope of practice.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Uses a structured approach in the process of assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs a comprehensive assessment following the 10 step checklist for children (IMCI).</li> <li>• Analyses potential health problems through accurate representation of data/</li> <li>• Identifies children who have been abused and reports to appropriate authorities.</li> <li>• Identifies women who have been victims of domestic violence and reports to appropriate authorities.</li> </ul>
2. Develops plan of care in consultation with clients/ carer to achieve optimal health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decides priorities of management based on comprehensive assessment.</li> <li>• Incorporates standard treatment in plan of management.</li> <li>• Agrees proposed plan of management with child/family related to potential outcomes.</li> </ul>
3. Implements the management to achieve planned outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes clinical judgments that demonstrate evidence-based knowledge.</li> <li>• Implements change in practice according to trends and issues which influence specialist child health nurses.</li> </ul>
4. Revises nursing interventions in accordance with evaluation data and determines further outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluates the outcomes plan and modifies the nursing management in the best interest of the child.</li> <li>• Acts when the child is not responding to prescribed management.</li> <li>• Prioritises interventions according to situation variances.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

<p>5. Educates child, family and community to maintain and promote health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organises educational activities that involve child (if appropriate) and family participation.</li> <li>• Initiates the environment to promote optimal education for children and family.</li> <li>• Acts as resource person to other health workers in relation to health promotion.</li> <li>• Uses an encouraging approach in the delivery of information with a positive attitude.</li> <li>• Facilitates the use of traditional and complimentary therapies which promote the health and wellbeing of children and family.</li> </ul>
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## Public Health and Health Promotion

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 9      Assists clients and community to achieve optimal health.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
<p>1. Recognises laws relevant to providing child health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices in accordance with food and sanitation act and child health act.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Actively uses the healthy island concept to incorporate a holistic approach to health promotion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminates health promotion information and material to the community based on the healthy island concept.</li> <li>• Assesses the use of material that has been disseminated.</li> <li>• Ensures information is making a positive difference.</li> <li>• Encourages the community to take responsibility for own health.</li> <li>• Educates the community about the healthy island concept.</li> <li>• Actively involves community to participate in health awareness eg. TB day.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Demonstrates public health awareness for the safety of children and the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informs authorities and communities when there is an outbreak of reportable infectious diseases.</li> <li>• Ensures that appropriate action is taken to manage situations where children are at risk.</li> <li>• Responds to public health related problems provided by other health care workers.</li> <li>• Encourages communities to take responsibility of reporting child abuse and family violence.</li> <li>• Encourages communities to take responsibility for their own health care needs.</li> <li>• Promotes positive living for children and families eg. HIV/AIDS.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Partnership with Community and Services

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 10 Promotes child health in collaboration with other agencies.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Identifies relevant health care team members and their roles in promoting optimal child health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refers child to other members of the health care team to provide specialist child health services.</li> <li>Accepts referrals from other members of the health care team.</li> </ul>
2. Identifies relevant agencies and their roles in assisting the promotion of optimal child health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refers child to other members of the health care team to provide services to assist with health outcomes (nutrition).</li> <li>Accepts referrals from other agencies related to child health issues.</li> </ul>
3. Recognises and refers child to relevant agency based on findings and situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies situations where the child's health is compromised and requires external assistance.</li> <li>Acts as an advocate for child health consumer group in the community.</li> </ul>

### **Acknowledgments**

The Papua New Guinea Nursing Council acknowledges the work of the many nurses in Australia and New Zealand who have produced and refined their professional competency standards over many years. These standards became the foundation for the development of professional nursing practice standards in Papua New Guinea. The Council wishes to thank them for their contribution to the advancement of the practice of nursing in this country.

*Rita Konilio* Registrar

Papua New Guinea Nursing Council

September 2002

### **References**

1. Adapted from Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) *National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 2000 and Nursing Council of New Zealand *Guidelines for Competence-Based Practising for the Registered Nurse* May 2000
2. Adapted from *Philosophy and Code of Ethics for Nurses* in PNG 1988 and Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) *Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia*, 1999
3. Adapted from Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) *Code of Professional Conduct* March 1999 and Nursing Council of New Zealand *Code of Conduct for Nurses and Midwives* RP September 1999.

