



**South African Nursing Council**  
(Under the provisions of the Nursing Act, 2005)

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## COMPETENCIES FOR PAEDIATRIC NURSE SPECIALIST

### 1. Introduction

The goal of a Paediatric Nurse Specialist is to identify the competencies discussed herein to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the population as a whole. The challenge for every nurse practitioner is to implement these competencies in a safe environment, taking cognisance of economic, cultural, political and any other factors that may have an impact on the lives of the people in the community he/she serves, without compromising quality. Like in any specialised field, these competencies have certain criteria which delineate them from basic nursing practice or an associated specialised field of nursing.

These criteria are as follows:

- General guidelines in the specialised environment of paediatric nursing science.
- These guidelines serve as a benchmark against which the specialised nurse practitioner assesses the quality of his/her professional practice and education.
- Competencies should function within a framework of certain values, namely:
  - commitment to professional and social responsibility;
  - accountability for personal and professional responsibility;
  - respect for diversity among colleagues and clients;
  - integrity in exemplifying the highest standards in personal and professional behaviour;
  - nursing excellence for quality outcomes in practice, education, research, advocacy and management; and
  - the generation of knowledge to enhance the science and practice of nursing to improve the health of the child.
- These competencies transcend settings in which child nursing is rendered (community, healthcare environment, rural and urban).

As a group, specialised child nurses provide a spectrum of other varieties of care, such as oncology, renal diseases and critical care.

## **2. NATURE OF SPECIALISATION**

A Paediatric (Child) Nurse Specialist is a professional nurse who has obtained a post graduate diploma qualification in child nursing science. The education and training must have been conducted at a nursing education institution which is accredited by the South African Nursing Council. The nurse specialist has a valid annual practising certificate for continuity of paediatric practice. The specialist is a resource person for students/learners, staff, other healthcare providers and the public. The Paediatric Nurse Specialist is a change agent with advanced knowledge and skills to put into practice, as well as a researcher for evidence-based practice and a nurse consultant for students, staff and the multidisciplinary team. She is the last in the continuum of specialised child nursing.

The specialty practice is based on a core body of knowledge and skills that is continually expanded by continuing education and refined by research.

## **3. CONTEXT**

The Child Nurse Specialist is found in the following healthcare settings:

- Primary healthcare, district, regional, tertiary and academic centres
- Specialised children's hospitals
- Academic/tertiary hospitals with paediatric/children's units
- Private healthcare centres
- Educational institutions: researchers and educators
- At management level: managers, coordinators of programmes and other quality improvement structures.

## **4. CLINICAL CONTINUUM**

The focus is on preventive and promotive healthcare. The specialist is in partnership with families and other healthcare providers (family-centred care). He/She functions at PHC Level where he/she screens/triages, assesses, plans, implements, evaluates and refers a child who warrants a higher level of care accordingly. The specialised

nurse also provides curative and rehabilitative healthcare.

## 5. OVERLAP OF COMPETENCIES WITH OTHER NURSING SPECIALISATIONS

There are several overlaps which occur between different specialties. These include:

- critical care nursing – sick neonates requiring intensive specialised care;
- midwifery and neonatal nursing – first 28 days of life of a healthy neonate;
- integrated management of childhood illnesses (neonates);
- neonatal surgical emergencies; and
- primary healthcare – the paediatric module.

## 6. COMPETENCIES

DOMAIN	
SUBDOMAIN/CORE COMPETENCY	SPECIFIC COMPETENCY
<b>DOMAIN 1: PROFESSIONAL, ETHICAL &amp; LEGAL PRACTICE</b>	
<b>1.1 Professional Practice</b>	1.1.1 Evaluates own Paediatric (Child) Nursing Practice in relation to current patient care information, professional practice standards, guidelines, rules and regulations
	1.1.2 Takes responsibility and accountability for own decisions, actions or omissions in childcare delivery
	1.1.3 Assumes the role of a child nurse specialist within a multidisciplinary team, based on her qualifications and skills
	1.1.4 Engages in performance appraisal on a regular basis, identifying areas of strength as well as areas where professional development would be beneficial
	1.1.5 Participates in peer reviews (Collegiality and Quality Assurance)
	1.1.6 Provides rationale for decisions and actions in the care of the child
	1.1.7 Utilises knowledge of development and life stages in the provision of overall care of the child
	1.1.8 Formulates child healthcare programmes based on analysis of the health profile of the community (catchment area)

DOMAIN	
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	1.1.9 Documents accurately and timely all clinical data related to child nursing
<b>1.2 Ethical Practice</b>	1.2.1 Participates in ethical decision-making within the multidisciplinary team
	1.2.2 Applies ethical theories and principles to make decisions related to paediatric care delivery
	1.2.3 Adheres to all relevant ethical codes of conduct set by the profession
	1.2.4 Maintains confidentiality and protects the privacy of information within legal and regulatory parameters
	1.2.5 Acts as a child and family advocate by virtue of the vulnerability of his/her client
	1.2.6 Protects the child from incompetent, unethical or illegal healthcare practices, including but not limited to, the use of children as subjects of research without permission
	1.2.7 Participates in the Ethics Committee for resolution of ethical issues and approval of research projects
	1.2.8 Provides guidance and information for the management, informed choice and consent throughout the course of care delivery
<b>1.3 Legal Practice</b>	Practices within a prescribed legal framework relevant to own practice, including but not limited to, the Constitution, the Children's Act, Nursing Act, National Health Act and SANC Rules and Regulations
DOMAIN 2: CLINICAL PRACTICE	
<b>2.1 Health Teaching &amp; Health Promotion</b>  The Child Nurse Specialist utilises a family-centred approach in providing paediatric/child nursing care	2.1.1 Employs teaching strategies that promote, maintain and restore child health
	2.1.2 Assesses health education needs and provides health teaching that enhances risk-reducing behaviours (safety), developmental needs and activities of daily living
	2.1.3 Formulates health promotion programmes for childcare services
	2.1.4 Monitors and evaluates health programmes and obtains feedback on the effectiveness of the programmes
	2.1.5 Conducts social marketing of health programmes

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	2.1.6 Utilises information technology and community networks to disseminate information on child healthcare
<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	2.2.1 Collects health data through a comprehensive assessment, using appropriate evidence-based assessment techniques and tools
	2.2.2 Collects data with respect for individual cultural needs in an age-appropriate manner
	2.2.3 Performs comprehensive physical examinations to identify abnormalities of growth and diagnoses child diseases and deformities
	2.2.4 Applies critical enquiry skills and clinical reasoning to diagnose risks and make decisions that will provide diagnosis
	2.2.5 Documents and shares findings with the patient's family and the multidisciplinary team in a timely manner and refers to other professionals
	2.2.6 Maintains confidentiality
<b>2.3 Diagnosis</b>	2.3.1 Analyses and utilises assessment information to provide a clinical judgement about the healthcare user's status and responses to actual or potential health conditions
	2.3.2 Formulates a diagnosis, prioritising emergencies and life-threatening conditions
	2.3.3 Utilises expert knowledge to interpret results of screenings and diagnostic investigations performed
	2.3.4 Individualises and prioritises expected outcomes
	2.3.5 Provides outcome measures from nursing diagnosis or identified problems
<b>2.4 Planning</b>	2.4.1 Develops a prioritised plan of care that includes interventions and alternatives to attain expected outcomes for the child
	2.4.2 Reviews and revises the plan with the multidisciplinary team
	2.4.3 Considers economic and environmental influences on the plan of care
<b>2.5 Implementation</b>	2.5.1 Implements the interventions identified in the plan

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	of care
	2.5.2 Utilises interventions that are consistent with evidence-based child nursing practice
	2.5.3 Collaborates with nursing colleagues and other members of the healthcare team and refers to community resources and systems as appropriate to implement the plan of care
	2.5.4 Integrates principles of safety and quality into interventions
	2.5.5 Documents implementation and modifications of the identified plan with the appropriate protection of patient confidentiality
<b>2.6 Evaluation</b>	2.6.1 Monitors and evaluates the progress of the childcare plan, based on the expected positive outcomes
	2.6.2 Conducts an evaluation that is systematic, ongoing and criterion-based
	2.6.3 Evaluates the effectiveness of planned strategies in relation to patient responses
	2.6.4 Involves the family and multidisciplinary team in the evaluation process
	2.6.5 Documents all processes and outcomes and keeps them confidential
<b>2.7 Therapeutic Communication &amp; Relationships</b>	2.7.1 Collaborates and communicates with the child, family, multidisciplinary team and the community in providing safe and holistic care
	2.7.2 Sets priorities for care, in collaboration with families, selecting the best options suitable for childcare
	2.7.3 Adopts best care practices for child healthcare
	2.7.4 Partners with the multidisciplinary team to effect change and generate positive outcomes through knowledge of the child and the family
DOMAIN 3: QUALITY OF PRACTICE	
<b>3.1 Quality Improvement</b>	3.1.1 Systematically evaluates and implements measures to improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of child nursing practice
	3.1.2 Identifies indicators used to monitor the quality of

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	child nursing practice
	3.1.3 Analyses quality data to identify opportunities for improving nursing practice
	3.1.4 Participates actively in the formulation of standards and policies relevant to childcare services
	3.1.5 Initiates and participates in quality audits aimed at improving childcare services
<b>3.2 Continuing Education</b>	3.2.1 Acquires current knowledge and skills that reflect evidence-based practice and applies them appropriately in a practice setting
	3.2.2 Evaluates own child nursing practice in relation to current patient care information, professional practice standards, guidelines and rules and regulations
	3.2.3 Influences professional excellence and competence through continuing education and lifelong learning
	3.2.4 Identifies own developmental needs in the area of specialisation and engages in activities of self-development to maintain competence
	3.2.5 Develops in-service education programmes to enhance childcare services
DOMAIN 4: MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	
	4.1 Serves as a role model, change agent, consultant, teacher and mentor in leadership matters of the profession and paediatric specialisation
	4.2 Participates in setting standards for paediatric nursing practice
	4.3 Initiates and participates in situational analysis that provides a status of and informs needed childcare services
	4.4 Engages in teamwork as a team player and team builder, modelling professionalism to peers and junior colleagues
	4.5 Provides leadership in the management of clinical care of children, utilising all childcare resources and referral services
	4.6 Manages human and material resources
	4.7 Advocates and creates an environment that is

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	supportive of safe care of individuals and groups of children
	4.8 Influences the development and implementation of standards, practice guidelines, policies and protocol
	4.9 Designs in-service education programs to ensure best practice in child health services
	4.10 Participates in analysing health profiles in paediatric services on all levels of care
DOMAIN 5: RESEARCH	
	5.1 Integrates evidence-based knowledge with the management of child healthcare services
	5.2 Identifies, examines, validates and evaluates inter-professional knowledge, theories and varied approaches in providing care to children
	5.3 Utilises best practice evidence to guide clinical decisions
	5.4 Uses working knowledge to identify clinical problems suitable for nursing research
	5.5 Conducts or participates in clinical research projects, consistent with ethical guidelines, to improve clinical care of children
	5.6 Evaluates the clinical significance and application of research findings that will improve care of children
	5.7 Critiques research for application to practice
	5.8 Utilises research findings for application in the development of policies, procedures and guidelines