



Rutgers Center for
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Discussion Paper

**Guiding Principles for the Nurse-Consumer
Relationship: Improved Collaboration and
Support of Consumers' Community Living**

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Guiding Principles for the Nurse-Consumer Relationship: Improved Collaboration and Support of Consumers' Community Living

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Background

This *Discussion Paper* summarizes the work of multiple participants over the course of two years. In April 2004, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy (CSHP) convened national and state thought leaders in nursing practice and regulation to develop consensus principles to guide the profession's collaboration with people who want to live in their homes and communities.

Older adults and people with disabilities seek support for this goal, while the nursing profession searches for policy and practice guidelines that honor its social mandates to the public it serves. The 2004 draft principles were revised and endorsed by the American Academy of Nursing's Expert Panel on Aging in November 2005. They are offered as a foundation for further dialogue within and across states.

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The Need for Collaboration Among Nurses and Consumers

As more older adults and people with disabilities chose to remain in their homes and communities with long term supportive services, they are seeking practical help in managing daily activities. Some of these activities are “health related” and involve tasks like help in taking medications, managing daily bowel and bladder routines, and obtaining nutrition with technological support. Based on national research and dialogue with both nurses and consumers, there is a need for principle-based collaboration that can lead to policies and programs that support consumers’ community living.

Principles for Collaboration

The Nurse-Consumer Relationship

The Nurse-Consumer Relationship is guided by principles that arise from nursing science, practice and ethics and from consumer self-direction philosophy and practice. These principles form the basis for collaboration and support of consumers’ desire to live in their homes and communities.

Nursing Science

Nursing science holds that *Health* is a broad concept that includes biological, psychological and social dimensions. This concept of health extends beyond any profession’s specific scope and assumes that consumers have a personal responsibility for their own health and well being.

Nursing Practice

Based on this science, nursing practice is grounded in a philosophy of collaboration with the consumer:

- Nurses emphasize strengths and abilities as they collaborate with consumers in developing individualized plans for care and supportive services.
- Nurses work with and through others (consumers, informal carers, and paid attendants/caregivers) to implement these individualized plans.
- Nurses support consumers' informed decision-making and personal responsibility as consumers balance their desire for both independence and personal safety.
- Nurses have the responsibility to learn and fulfill this teaching role.

Nursing Ethics

Nursing's ethical code of conduct places *advocacy* as a core nursing value at the personal and societal levels. Nurses promote health and choice without regard to age or disability. They advocate elimination of ageism and barriers to access to care for all persons.

Consumer Self-Direction

Consumer self-direction principles are consistent with nursing science, practice and ethics. These principles hold that:

- Consumers have the right to pursue community living, regardless of their age or disability. This right is assured by federal law.
- Consumers may desire to direct their own care.
- Consumers may seek consultation from professionals who have the knowledge and skills to provide such consultation.

Summary

These principles derived from nursing science, practice and ethics, and from consumer self-direction philosophy and practice, provide overall guidance for nurse-consumer collaboration for community living:

In accordance with federal law and professional ethics, the professional nurse should strive to assist the consumer to achieve the most integrated setting and least restrictive environment throughout the lifespan.