 Department of Health Government of Nunavut		<b>NURSING POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROTOCOLS</b> <b>Community Health Nursing</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>		<b>SECTION:</b>	<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>
Certificate of Illness		Nursing Practice	07-027-00
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	<b>REVIEW DUE:</b>	<b>REPLACES NUMBER:</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PAGES:</b>
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<b>APPLIES TO:</b>			
Community Health Nurses and Community Psychiatric Nurses			

#### 1. BACKGROUND:

Registered Nurses employed in the positions of Community Health Nurse (CHN) and Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) may prescribe time off of work or school as part of the treatment plan for a client. As CHNs and CPNs are responsible for delivery primary health care services, they require the authority to sign certificates of illness. This policy is intended to describe the parameters for such action.

#### 2. POLICY:

2.1 Under the authority of this policy, the CHN / CPN is authorized to issue a certificate of illness for a period that is not to exceed three (3) days. If the CHN/CPN assesses that the patient will require a longer recovery time, then physician or nurse practitioner (NP) consult is required.

2.2 CHNs/CPNs are required to assess clients at the health centre before they are permitted to sign a certificate of illness or "sick note".

During exceptional circumstances, the need for an assessment can be superseded by a directive from one of the following:

- i. The office of the Deputy Minister or Assistant Deputy Minister,
- ii. Territorial Chief of Staff
- iii. Chief Medical Officer of Health
- iv. Community Physician or specialist.

#### 3. PRINCIPLES:

3.1 An employer, educational institution, or other third party may request a client provide a certificate of illness for short term absences as per their institutional policies.

3.2 Certificate of illness is a legal document and can have implications for the clients, health care provider and third party agencies. Therefore the CHN/CPN is required to conduct an appropriate assessment prior to issuing a certificate of illness to safeguard the validity of the details written in the certificate.

3.3 CHNs/CPNs have a legal and professional obligation to maintain the confidentiality of client information. The CHN/CPN may be permitted to report client information to a third party by means of a certificate of illness when client / substitute decision maker consent is obtained.

#### 4. GUIDELINES:

The following guideline is intended to provide guidance to CHNs/CPNs when a medical certificate of illness is deemed necessary and/or requested by the client under different

scenarios. The guideline does not replace clinical judgement – decisions should be individualized. The physician, NP or supervisor is to be consulted as required.

**4.1** The client presents to the health centre with reports of illness or injury.

**4.2** The CHN/CPN assesses the client, documents findings and determines whether absence from work or school is required as part of the treatment plan:

**4.2.1** If it is determined that absence is appropriate plan of care:

**4.2.1.1** Ask the client if they require a certificate of illness for their employer or school. If yes, the CHN/CPN will complete and sign a sick note for a maximum of 3 days of absence.

**4.2.1.2** If the client did not request a certificate at the first visit, but subsequently returns with the same presenting complaint, the CHN/CPN may issue the certificate at that visit. The CHN/CPN is permitted to cite the previous clinic visit dates related to this illness / injury based on the contents of the client's health record.

**4.2.1.3** Place a copy of the certificate of illness in the client's health record.

**4.2.2** Where the CHN/CPN determines that a certificate of illness is not warranted (based on assessment findings and best practices):

**4.2.2.1** The reason(s) shall be discussed with the client and the details of this discussion documented in the client's health record.

**4.2.2.2** The CHN/CPN would only be permitted to complete a certificate of illness which states that the client was seen at the health centre on that date.

**4.3** The client presents to the health centre requesting an extension of the original certificate of illness (beyond the original 3 days):

**4.3.1** The CHN/CPN assesses client, documents findings and determines if additional days of leave are warranted.

**4.3.1.1** Where the CHN/CPN determines extension of original leave timeframe is warranted, the CHN/CPN may provide one (1) more certificate of illness for a maximum of 3 days. If another extension is requested after that, or if the CHN/CPN determines that the client's condition will not likely resolve within the three (3) days, then the CHN/CPN shall consult the physician or NP.

**4.3.1.2** Where the CHN/CPN determines extension of the period of absence is not warranted (based on assessed findings), the reason(s) shall be discussed with the client and documented. An alternate plan of care to be discussed.

**4.4** Where a client requests a certificate of illness after the illness / injury is resolved:

**4.4.1** It shall be explained to the client that this practice is not permitted as the certificate is a legal document and staff are not permitted to back date the certificate, except under special circumstances, including (but not limited to):

**4.4.1.1** Return to the community from medical travel – dates the client was out of the community on medical travel may be stated on the certificate.

- 4.4.1.2 Conditions of guideline statement 4.2.1.2 apply
- 4.4.2 The CHN/CPN may only document the day the client was seen in the health centre and any further time directed as "off" for the purposes of the treatment plan. A CHN/CPN may not provide a certificate of illness for any "sick days" incurred before the client presents to the health centre.
- 4.5 There may be special circumstances whereby the client cannot be assessed by the CHN/CPN prior to issuing a certificate of illness. These may include (but not limited to):
- 4.5.1 In exceptional circumstances such as an outbreak of respiratory disease whereby the Department of Health may issue a directive requesting that clients do not present to the health centre for sick notes. Under these rare circumstances, a CHN/CPN may issue a certificate of illness without seeing the client.
- 4.5.2 The client returns to the community after seeing a specialist and/or having a procedure done and requests a certificate of illness.
- 4.5.2.1 The CHN/CPN shall review the discharge documents (if available).
- 4.5.2.2 If it is not clearly stated in the discharge note, then the CHN/CPN is to use their clinical judgement based on their knowledge of the client's illness, injury or procedure completed and may issue a certificate of illness as warranted.
- 4.5.2.3 If the client requires a longer period off of work or school (e.g. beyond 3 days), then the physician or NP is to be consulted.
- 4.6 Legal requirements for completing the certificate of illness:
- 4.6.1 Must be legibly written on the Department of Health approved form, third party form provided by the client, or on department letterhead
- 4.6.2 Contain the client's full name and date of birth.
- 4.6.3 Based on the facts known to the CHN/CPN
- 4.6.4 Date of the consultation
- 4.6.5 Not to be backdated or pre-dated (except under special circumstances)
- 4.6.6 The certificate should contain a statement whether the client is fit for duty and the recommended period of leave.
- 4.6.7 Protect client confidentiality, include only the information necessary and verify the client consents to the information being provided
- 4.6.8 The authorizing CHN/CPN is to clearly sign their name and designation on the certificate.

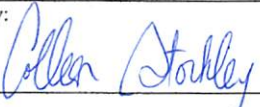

**5. RELATED POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND LEGISLATION:**

Policy 06-001-00

Confidentiality

Policy 06-008-00

Documentation Standards

Approved By: 	Date: Feb 22/16
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