



COLLEGE OF AIR AND SURFACE TRANSPORT NURSES

STANDARDS of PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Air and Surface Transport Nurses (COASTN) is a special interest section of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) for nurses who work or are interested in the aviation/inter-hospital transport environment.

Ko Te Tiriti o Waitangi Te Tuhinga Motuhake o Aotearoa. Tautokoana e nga Neehi Whakahaere o Aotearoa me Te Rununga Neehi Māori o Aotearoa hoki, I tenei tuhinga Motuhake, a, ka whakanui ka whakapiki hoki tatou kia rite te tunga o te tangata whenua me nga Neehi Whakahaere o Aotearoa.

The Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) is the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The New Zealand Nurse's Organisation and Te Runanga o Aotearoa acknowledge the great importance of the living document and will continue to respect and promote the equal standing of tangata whenua and NZNO.

The standards reflect COASTNs perspective on what constitutes the requirements for providing safe and effective transport nursing services. Transport nurses must extend the principles of novice through expert nursing practice in the aviation environment while acknowledging that providing competent transport nurse practice necessitates solid knowledge and understanding of the physiological effects of altitude as well as the aviation environment as a workplace.

The Transport Nurse Standards of Practice are based on the NZNO Standards of Practice (2003). They should be read in conjunction with the Aviation Industry Association (AIA), New Zealand Ambulance Standards 8156 (2019), and the Aeromedical Society of Australasia (ASA) standards. These flight nursing standards are intended to serve as a framework and foundation for each flight programme to continue developing protocols and policies tailored to flight nurses and their needs.

Guidelines for auditing the standards are included and can assist in measuring actual performance against the standards.

COASTN and NZNO intend to review these standards every three to five years.



COLLEGE OF AIR AND SURFACE TRANSPORT NURSES

Transport nursing is a specialised field dedicated to providing the best possible health outcomes for neonates, children, adults, and their families/whānau. Transport nurses specialise in flight nursing and provide specialised nursing care.

Breadth of Practice

The articles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi, Kawanatanga/governance, Rangatiratanga/self-determination, Oritetanga/equity and Wairuatanga/spiritual freedom are reflected in the breadth of transport nursing practice.

Flight nurses recognise and respond to altered physiology at altitude and aim to advance and apply aviation occupational health and safety principles.

The COASTN Standards for Flight Nursing Practice is a comprehensive document that outlines the scope of flight nursing practice.

Objectives:

1. To promote minimum standards of patient care in the aeromedical setting.
2. To develop minimum training standards for flight nurses.
3. To promote the delivery of quality care to patients/whānau throughout the transport process.
4. To share transport nursing knowledge nationally through various media, e.g., conferences, websites etc.
5. To develop and promote optimum working conditions and safety for all transport nurses.
6. To promote and support continuing nursing education for all transport nurses.
7. To promote official representation for transport nurses locally, nationally, and internationally.

POSITION STATEMENTS

The College of Air and Surface Transport Nurses holds with NZNO policy to promote a healthy workplace and staff throughout all areas, including the aero medical environment.

1. **Fit to fly**

Flight nurses in New Zealand encounter various challenges that can affect their physical and mental wellbeing. These challenges include multiple or extended transfers during a single shift, exposure to diverse flight modalities, and experiencing physiological and mental stressors while working independently in a challenging environment. Additionally, they must fulfil their ground-based job obligations, which can place high demands on their fitness and health. All of these factors can undermine the health and fitness of transport nurses.

As sole practitioners in a challenging environment, transport nurses must assure managers that they are fully capable of attending to high-risk or acute patients and that their decision-making processes during transport are safe and accountable.

The College of Air and Surface Transport Nurses recommends that all flight nurses participate in a yearly health check to ensure that they are physically able to cope with the demands of the aeromedical environment in order to determine 'fit to fly' for flight nurses. If available, the employer may provide this, or a private provider may.

2. **Safe to Fly**

Air ambulance requirements in New Zealand may require flight nurses to fly several legs in one mission or to undertake multiple missions in one day. Actual or potential adverse events, high acuity patients and long hours in the aeromedical environment may place flight nurses under high stress, making it difficult to maintain clinical safety when transporting patients by air ambulance.

The College of Air and Surface Transport Nurses recommends robust debriefing policies and staff support resources to achieve staff and patient safety in flight. They provide a supportive environment in the event of a potential actual/adverse event, as well as a transport nurse's right to refuse to transport a patient they believe is beyond their clinical expertise. Transport nurses must also be supported in determining their own fitness before embarking on multiple missions and stepping down if necessary. They must also have access to and support from the organisations and an event reporting system.

In a well-defined programme, transportation nurses receive ongoing education and professional development. This should include but is not limited to introducing new technology, resources, equipment, and standards in the aviation industry.

STANDARD ONE

Transport Nurses are accountable for their practice.

PROCESS

Transport Nurses will:

- 1.1 Work within their breadth of practice based on current nursing education, management and research knowledge, judgment, experience, and competence.
- 1.2 Practice according to authorised ethical codes, including the NZNO Code of Ethics, the Privacy Act (2020) and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights (1996).
- 1.3 Address ethical problems using an appropriate ethical framework, e.g., NZNO resource: How to Resolve Difficult Professional/Ethical Issues.
- 1.4 Practice within relevant legislation, e.g., The Health Practitioners Assurance Act (2003), Medicines Act (1981), Medicines Regulations (1984), Civil Aviation Act (1990), pursuant (CAA) Rules and Regulations, New Zealand Ambulance NZ 1.0:2011 and NZS8156 (2019).
- 1.5 Actively promote professional transport nursing by presenting a positive nursing image and participating in professional debate.
- 1.6 Participate in forming and using professional, organisational and workplace guidelines, e.g., position descriptions, practice protocols, and professional standards.
- 1.7 Practice is planned, documented and research-based.
- 1.8 Maintain an up-to-date knowledge base through ongoing education concerning the specialty area relevant to their particular transport-nursing role and integrate this knowledge with clinical management.
- 1.9 Have a level of nursing education, knowledge, experience and skills sufficient to safely care for any individual patient within the breadth of their practice.
- 1.10 The flight nurse should complete the COASTN passport training specific to flight nursing before undertaking independent transfers. In addition, introduction and orientation programmes should include but are not limited to:
 - Aviation Physiology and the Stresses of Flight

- Aircraft orientation and safety
 - In-flight emergencies, both medical and aircraft related
 - Risk management
 - Communications
 - Equipment familiarity
 - Relevant policies and procedures
 - Crew Resource management
 - Human Factors
- 1.11 Use professional and organisational guidelines that are readily available and regularly reviewed to maintain relevance.
- 1.12 Practice within the scope of practice as per the Nursing Council of NZ and practice according to NZNO statements on ethics of nursing research and the research policies of the employing institution/company.
- 1.14 Research undertaken by transport nurses should be ethically sound, supervised and reviewed by the appropriate ethics committee/academic institution.
- 1.15 Encourage research findings to be accessible to colleagues through conference presentations and journal publishing.
- 1.16 Articulate their practice based on the available research-based evidence.

OUTCOMES

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi is implemented in Transport Nursing practice.
- Transport nursing practice is clinically and culturally safe, ethical, legal, effective and research-based and responds to the holistic changing health needs of patients and their Whānau in the aviation environment.
- Individual rights are protected and enhanced.
- Ethical problems are addressed.
- The changing needs and expectations of the Tangata Whenua and the community are considered when planning transport nursing practice strategies and service delivery.
- Transport nurses' contribution within the community is visible, appropriate and acceptable.
- The image and strength of transport nursing is enhanced.

- Nursing research is recognised and taken into account in transport nursing practice.
- Ongoing evaluation is integral in transport nursing practice.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- Transport nurses hold a current practicing certificate.
- Transport nurses monitor, report and participate in the review of incidents.
- Flight nurses will hold a yearly certificate of health endorsing 'fitness to fly'
- Statutory requirements are met.
- Flight nursing standards and practice protocols are available, accessible and acceptable to flight nurses and employers and can be applied within the working environment.
- Transport nurses demonstrate responsiveness to consumer feedback.
- Ongoing evaluation of care and resulting changes are evident.
- Evidence of use of a nursing ethical framework.
- Audit current nursing knowledge, e.g., peer review, clinical supervisor and preceptorship system.
- Competency-based certification, e.g., NZRC and advanced life support, IV Certification.
- Evidence of research in practice.
- Nurses reflect and evaluate practice in both formal and informal ways.

STANDARD TWO

Within their breadth of practice, transport nurses are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their patients.

PROCESS

Transport Nurse will:

- 2.1 Apply current nursing research-based knowledge using a documented systematic approach to meet the holistic needs of patients and Whānau.
- 2.2 Assess current patient management, condition, history, medications, laboratory results and radiological data, if available, before transport.
- 2.3 Identify risks; develop and facilitate risk management strategies, taking into account patient assessment, continuity of care and the unique features of the aviation environment, e.g., altered physiology at altitude.
- 2.4 Be involved in developing and implementing a risk management program with mechanisms for identifying, reporting, and managing incidents in the aviation environment.
- 2.5 Demonstrate competency, as identified in the COASTN passport, in clinical and technical skills and systematically evaluate and continually reassess the efficiency and outcomes of interventions throughout the transport process.
- 2.6 Respect the spiritual beliefs and values of colleagues, patients, and whānau.
- 2.7 Demonstrate respect and support cultural and traditional values of the patient, whānau, and colleagues, maintain communication, and encourage participation in the planning of care.
- 2.8 Ensure documentation is comprehensive, regular, relevant, accessible and retrievable and should reflect assessment, intervention and evaluation (responses to intervention).
- 2.9 Ensure a complete written and verbal handover occurs from registered nurse to registered nurse whenever the caregivers change.
- 2.11 Demonstrate specific knowledge of the aviation environment and its physiological effect on patients and crew members.
- 2.12 Participate in developing and implementing standards of flight nursing practice and quality assurance activities.

- 2.13 In collaboration with the pilot(s) and crew, share the responsibility for maintaining a safe environment for self, patient, colleagues and others, including the issue of who may or may not accompany the patient.
- 2.14 Act as an advocate for the patient and escalate as appropriate, and refuse to accept risks that may compromise patient safety, e.g., concerns due to weather conditions, unrestrained combative patient, equipment or vehicle problems or inadequate skill mix of the flight team.
- 2.15 Respect the patient's right to choose whether or not to participate in a transport.
- 2.16 Develop and implement an annual safety training program following their aeromedical organisation's policies and procedures. The program will include but is not limited to:
- Aircraft emergency equipment and evacuation procedures
 - External safety - loading and unloading, correct aircraft approach, dangers around aircraft.
 - Internal familiarisation and safety, e.g., use of suitable restraints for the patient, passengers, crew and equipment.
 - Pre-flight briefings.
 - Dangerous goods briefing.
 - Use of equipment and communication systems on board.
 - Relevant and effective crew communication sharing, including hazard recognition.
 - Infection control in the aeromedical environment.
 - Maintain optimal monitoring appropriate to the patient's condition throughout the flight.
 - Suitable clothing, including ear protection from noise and protection for self and patient.
 - Manage in-flight and onboard emergencies and take appropriate actions, e.g., aircraft depressurisation, engine fire, smoke in the cabin, unscheduled landing, undercarriage failure, weather phenomena, etc.
 - Airport security.
 - Introduction to survival skills applicable to the terrain covered.
 - Relevant sections of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Rules and Regulations and the Ambulance New Zealand Standards and Standards NZS 8156 (2019).

- 2.17 Maintain currency in fundamental changes to flight nursing and the ongoing development of flight nursing curricula. Update safety education annually and validate competency through professional certification.
- 2.18 Ensure that duty schedules for flight nurses are according to the NZNO MECCA structure to avoid fatigue that could impair judgment during the transport process. Flight nurses are to report fatigue, not continue or decline the task if required due to fatigue.
- 2.19 Meet physical expectations, which enhance their ability to perform tasks and functions specific to the role of flight nursing.

Including:

- Physically capable of evacuating a patient from the aircraft.
- Annual physical fitness to fly health check.
- Physically able to fit in crew seats and standard restraint systems.

OUTCOMES

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi is reflected in Transport Nursing practice.
- Transport nursing practice protects the patient, whānau, pilots and crew from physical and psychological harm, minimising avoidable risk.
- Transport nursing practice is appropriate and acceptable to identified patients, and whānau decisions and choices are respected and validated.
- Transport nursing practice recognises and respects the cultural, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing of the patient and Whānau.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- Evidence of specific practice guidelines is present to ensure adequate assessment and delivery of care.
- Evidence of nurse participation in the development and implementation of risk management programmes
- Flight Nurses audit risk management programmes and demonstrate improvements in care delivery.
- Evidence of regular participation in aviation safety training
- Patient feedback supports that flight nurses recognise, respect and practice in a culturally, emotionally and spiritually safe manner, facilitating the options and choices of the patient/whānau.
- Regular clinical governance review meetings ensure safe working environment systems are in place.

- A transport nurse is assigned as a health and safety representative
- Audits demonstrate that flight nurses participate in quality assurance programs.
- Regular audits of environmental safety are carried out.
- Evidence that the practice environment is safe concerning privacy, equipment and resources.

STANDARD THREE

Transport Nurses are responsible for entering into and maintaining a professional relationship with patients, Whānau, the community, colleagues and employers.

PROCESS

Transport Nurse will:

- 3.1 Work in partnership with tangata whenua to uphold Mātauranga, Māori research methods, beliefs and values.
- 3.2 Provide clinical excellence during care delivery during transport and within the clinical situation to deliver relevant information with all interactions involving patients/whānau.
- 3.3 Use a comprehensive framework to assess and appropriately determine patient health status, nursing intervention outcomes, and documentation outcomes.
- 3.4 Communicate effectively with the patient and their whānau in the planning and delivery of care.
- 3.5 Enter into and maintain partnerships with colleagues and employers to ensure best practice standards are met and maintained by actively sharing and promoting their knowledge and skills.
- 3.6 Develop and maintain professional and collegial links.
- 3.7 Participate in assessing transport needs and clinical status and be responsible and inform management and operational leads.
- 3.8 Participate in decision-making regarding health care delivery.
- 3.9 Advocate for excellent health care for patients/whānau/colleagues and employers.
- 3.10 Listen, discuss, and educate to enable colleagues/patients/ whānau to make informed decisions.

- 3.11 Actively seek and utilise knowledge and skills from colleagues within the healthcare profession and other areas of expertise, e.g., the aviation industry.
- 3.12 Consult and lobby at regional and national levels, developing policies and guidelines for issues regarding the transport of patients and their whānau.
- 3.13 Maintain the role of advocate for the patient and whānau in matters of research.
- 3.14 Communicate and consult with patients, whānau, colleagues, and employers in identifying and developing topics for nursing research.
- 3.15 Monitor and audit the standard of nursing care delivered and, if necessary, facilitate and participate in implementing change.
- 3.16 When assisting with clinical research, will be adequately informed regarding the justification research study, objectives, and design. In addition, adhere to the requirements of the research protocol.
- 3.17 Will participate in disseminating current innovations and research findings relevant to nursing practice to colleagues and employers.

OUTCOMES

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi will be reflected in nursing relationships/partnerships.
- Relationships/partnerships reflect effective communication.
- Patients, whānau and the community benefit from flight nursing experience.
- Transport nursing practice develops within a negotiated relationship with whānau/patients and employers.
- Transport nurses work within a multidisciplinary team to provide quality care for patients/whānau within the scope of their practice.
- Transport nurses participate in the planning, implementing and evaluating health services in partnership with patients/whānau/community/colleagues and employers.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- Demonstrates integration of the principles of Tiriti o Waitangi into professional development in line with the nursing council competencies and codes.
- Transport nurses are responsible for entering into and maintaining a partnership with the patient, whānau and family, community, colleagues, and employers.

- Nursing records/research demonstrates the use of an appropriate nursing framework and patient/whānau involvement in the planning, delivering and evaluating care.
- Audit interactions with the patient/whānau, colleagues and the health/flight care teams.
- Evidence of patient feedback on the quality of nurse/family relationships.
- Evidence of flight nursing representation on relevant health planning committees.
- Evidence of nurse-led and provided health promotion programmes.
- Assessment of the consistency of information and education to families.
- Evidence of regular nursing performance appraisal and reviews.

STANDARD FOUR

Transport Nurses are committed to nursing professional development.

PROCESS

Transport Nurse will:

- 4.1 Within their scope of practice, reflect the impact of Te Tiriti o Waitangi on the health outcomes of Tangata Whenua directly.
- 4.2 Ensure that education about Māori knowledge is delivered appropriately in consultation with tangata whenua.
- 4.3 Invest in the resources required to maintain and expand the knowledge and skills required for competent practice and ongoing professional development in the transportation environment.
- 4.4 Be able to identify their own transport nursing learning needs and address them.
- 4.5 Participate and provide programs designed to encourage professional development and to further nursing knowledge. Attend the COASTN Aeromedical course, symposiums, and conferences.
- 4.6 Share knowledge with colleagues, patients, and the community both formally and informally. Practice is influenced by the discussion of professional issues through networking.
- 4.7 Participate in and promote the standards of other professional bodies/networks concerned with flight nursing and related specialties, such as NZNO specialised groups such as the Critical Care Nurses Section, College of Emergency Care Nurses, Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa, and the aviation industry.
- 4.8 Recognise the expertise and skills of colleagues from nursing, medical and aviation fields to facilitate professional development.
- 4.9 Be involved in professional dialogue within a multidisciplinary team.
- 4.10 Contribute to the education of colleagues.
- 4.11 Create and maintain a professional portfolio, as well as a log of transport hours and number of transports.
- 4.12 Be provided with a supportive environment that commits resources to assist the flight nurse in expanding knowledge and maintaining skills required for competent practice.

- 4.13 Be current members of relevant professional organisations.
- 4.14 Be responsible for and participate in the regular evaluation of their flight nursing practice.
- 4.15 Be responsible for and participate in the regular evaluation and monitoring of their flight nursing programs and orientation of new team members.
- 4.16 Research creative and innovative approaches to nursing practice.

OUTCOMES

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi is an integral part of nursing education and practice.
- Transport nursing practice is based on current nursing knowledge, research and experience to ensure best practice.
- Research is an integral part of flight nursing practice.
- Transport nursing practice is influenced by the discussion of professional issues through professional networking.
- Improvements in nursing practice and patient care are made due to regular evaluations by nurses, tangata whenua, and consumers.
- Transport nursing includes creative and innovative approaches to practice.
- Transport nurses are active members of relevant professional organisations.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- Demonstrates the integration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi into professional development.
- Evidence of relevant ongoing specialist education.
- Evidence of professional development planning and participation within a performance review process.
- Transport nurses develop and maintain their professional portfolios.
- Evidence of improvements to nursing practice as a result of the above processes.
- Membership in professional nursing groups
- Evidence of mentorship and support frameworks for flight nurses.

STANDARD FIVE

Transport Nurses manage resources efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of a patient and whānau while in transit.

PROCESS

Transport Nurse will:

- 5.1 Consult with tangata whenua to ensure that taonga/resources are used appropriately.
- 5.2 Participate in decision-making processes that affect health needs/resources.
- 5.3 Participate in the ongoing measurement of all data related to service provision.
- 5.4 Contribute to workforce planning.
- 5.5 Have the combined expertise and experience to assess actual and potential risks and plan, implement, and evaluate interventions during transportation.
- 5.6 All equipment should be certified and be at approved flight standards when used for transport.
- 5.7 Identify and document inadequate or unsafe resources and monitor subsequent change.
- 5.8 Participate in technology maintenance, assessment, and review.
- 5.9 Support the provision and identify educational requirements for resource management.
- 5.10 When appropriate, refer to others with relevant knowledge and expertise.
- 5.11 Identify inadequate or unsafe resources with each mode of transportation, identify risk and mitigate concerning resource management, taking into account unexpected delays, and act to improve these.
- 5.12 Be involved in the ongoing process of monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality and appropriateness of care.
- 5.13 Ensure that appropriate resources are available to the patient's needs.

5.14 Facilitate and monitor resource utilisation reviews and respond to review findings.

5.15 Facilitate ongoing resource utilisation reviews, both national and international and share findings with others.

OUTCOMES

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi will be reflected in the management of resources.
- Transport nurses know and understand the needs of their patients/whānau.
- Transport nursing practice reflects appropriate nursing skills.
- Available resources are provided at the right time, quality, and quantity to meet patient needs and appropriate safe staffing requirements.
- Transport nurses will endeavour to identify inadequate resources and take corrective action.
- Transport nurses participate in resource planning to meet the changing needs of the patient/whānau.
- Transport nursing practice influences decisions regarding the use of technology in the care of patients in the aviation environment.
- Transport Nurses manage available resources efficiently and effectively to meet patient/whānau healthcare needs.
- Transport Nurses participate in resource planning.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- Demonstrates the integration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi into resource management.
- Evidence of appropriate demographic and workload measurements to meet the needs of the client population.
- Flight nurses participate in the systematic review of resource planning and utilisation.
- A strategic plan for nursing workforce development, which demonstrates appropriate skill mix and capacity, is available.
- Evidence of patient/whānau feedback and resulting changes to the management of care
- Evidence of involvement in risk management
- Flight Nurse representation on relevant transport planning committees
- Evidence that flight nurses undertake processes that demonstrates appropriate resource use.

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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
<i>Accountability</i>	The acceptance of rights and responsibilities of conduct and behaviour. It is the acceptance of responsibility to self, profession, client, employer, and community as a whole.
<i>Audit</i>	The process by which the results of an activity are evaluated to see if the expected level has been achieved as set out by the present rules, guidelines, or standards. It is the process of determining what is happening against what should be happening, of establishing whether what you think you are doing is actually what you do. It is a concrete measurement or evidence of achievement about standards.
<i>Competent Practice</i>	Possession and application of required skills and knowledge.
<i>Community</i>	The potential client base served by a specific health service.
<i>Cultural Values</i>	Morals, beliefs, attitudes, and standards that derive from a particular cultural group. Cultural is not only seen as ethnic-specific but must include groups from within cultures. e.g., Cultures of class, socialisation, age, sexual orientation, etc.
<i>Ethical Problems</i>	Fall into two distinct categories: ethical violations and ethical dilemmas. An ethical violation involves the neglect of a moral obligation, e.g., a nurse who fails to provide care to a neonate and their family because of their race. An ethical dilemma arises when ethical reasons both for and against a course of action are present, e.g., prolonged ventilation of an extremely premature baby.
<i>Evaluation</i>	Peer review, self-evaluation, service review etc.
<i>Evidence-based practice</i>	Practice-based on quantitative and qualitative research.
<i>Expertise and a specialise expression of caring</i>	This may take many forms. These may be enabling, listening, coaching, interpreting, monitoring, advocating, collaborating, attending, being present, comforting, encouraging, protecting,

	responding, negotiating, and ministering.
<i>Family</i>	This includes parents, siblings, whānau and extended family.
<i>Holistic</i>	Acknowledging the spiritual, psychological, cultural and physical needs and/or influences.
<i>Kaupapa Māori Research</i>	Research methods that are based on Māori protocol and customs, where rangatiratanga or self-determination ensures that Māori have power and control over the research.
<i>Multidisciplinary team</i>	A group of health professionals involved in care. These will include nurses, doctors, social workers, dieticians, and physiotherapists, as well as community-based workers.
<i>Professional Development</i>	Formal and informal education, which contribute to nurses personal knowledge, skills, and experience.
<i>Resource Utilisation Review</i>	A systematic process for reviewing the way resources are allocated and used with efficiency and effectiveness being the main criteria.
<i>Risk Management</i>	A systematic approach to identifying, monitoring and reducing risks.
<i>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</i>	The Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi, which in international law is accepted as the correct version.