

Pinnacle MHN Information Pack

Primary Care Assistant / Medical Centre Assistant (PCA/ MCA)

2020

Introduction of the Primary Care Assistant (PCA) role

The PCA is an unregulated health worker role that has been developed as part of the extended general practice team in response to changing health workforce needs and as a key enabler to support the implementation of the core components of the Health care home model of care.

The role aims to benefit patients by supporting people, families/whānau, and the healthcare team in a primary care setting. The valued role providing administrative and clinical support to the general practice team, freeing up clinician time to allow more quality time to interact with patients. Tasks include ordering supplies, the decontamination and sterilisation of equipment, undertaking basic patient observations, as well as preparing for and assisting clinicians with minor surgery. The continuing role development is important, particularly in its partnership with nursing, to allow nurses to work to top of scope, one of the key goals in Pinnacle's nursing strategy. PCAs work under the direction and delegation of regulated health professionals.

Training

Training for the PCA role is supported through workplace mentoring alongside a recognised programme provided by an accredited education provider. A modular on-line learning programme is the most appropriate delivery format as this allows for on-the-job learning and allows access for students from across the network and country. Pinnacle MHN has partnered with Wintec to develop a unique training programme for the role that results in a formal recognised qualification.

Successful students will graduate with a New Zealand Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (Primary Care Practice Assistance). This is NZQA Level 4 accredited.

Primary Healthcare Practice Assistance- Te Mahi Awhina Tuatahi (Level 4) Wintec information

[https://www.wintec.ac.nz/study-at-wintec/courses/health-and-wellbeing/primary-healthcare-practice-assistance-te-mahi-awhina-tuatahi-\(level-4\)](https://www.wintec.ac.nz/study-at-wintec/courses/health-and-wellbeing/primary-healthcare-practice-assistance-te-mahi-awhina-tuatahi-(level-4))

This programme includes basic counselling and group work skills, knowledge of New Zealand law and the Treaty of Waitangi, and broader social and political issues. Basic Te Reo and tikanga as it applies to social services is also included.

This entry level programme will provide you with the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to provide administrative and clinical support across a primary care practice. You will work in health care teams under the broad direction and delegation from a registered health professional and be able to assist general practitioners, registered nurses, and management in the day to day operation of primary care practice including routine clinical tasks and procedures, as well as administrative duties.

Please note you must be working (paid or voluntarily) for at least 12.5 hours a week in a primary care practice setting by the start of the programme

Throughout the programme the student requires a workplace mentor. The mentor supports the students in practice with an expected commitment of one hour per week.

Learning is undertaken through online directed hours, approximately 4-5 hours per week where students are introduced to learning and assignments. This learning is then implemented into workplace practical development. The workplace practical development takes place in the student's current employment.

The 120 credit Primary Care Practice Assistance programme is comprised of 8x 15 credit modules and includes 400 hours of mentored work placement. This programme is primarily delivered online with a two-day face to face introduction workshop. The workshop will provide you with the opportunity to meet other students in the programme, the academic staff, and give you an overview of the programme requirements, and ensure you are engaged with on line delivery platform.

Delegation and supervision

Health professionals – like nurses, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, midwives and allied health professionals all hold professional accountability and responsibility. They are accountable for the assessment, planning and evaluation of standards of care, and for delegating work to non-regulated support staff and student learners. PCAs, like other team members, are accountable for their actions. They have social, ethical, legal and contractual accountabilities and are responsible for the tasks they undertake. They must not work beyond their level of competence.

Accountability for team working includes a commitment that team members make to themselves and their team members to demonstrate the attitudes, behaviours and actions that promote team effectiveness and therefore high standards of care. The part that registered nurses play in the act of delegation is a critical one and an essential factor in enabling the PCA to become a fully integrated member of the team. PCAs have a duty of care and therefore a legal liability with regard to the patient. They must ensure that they perform competently. They must also acknowledge their limitations and tell someone with authority when they are unable to perform competently.

In order for anyone to be accountable they must:

- have the ability to perform the task
- accept the responsibility for doing the task
- have the authority to perform the task within their job description and the policies and protocols of the practice

Registered nurses also have a duty of care and a legal liability with regard to the patient. If they have delegated a task they must ensure that the task has been appropriately delegated.

This means that:

- the task is necessary and delegation is in the patient's best interest
- the PCA understands the task and how it is to be performed
- the PCA has the skills and abilities to perform the task competently
- the PCA accepts the responsibility to perform the task competently

Employers have responsibilities too, and as PCAs develop and extend their roles the employer must ensure that their staff are trained and supervised properly until they can demonstrate competence in their new roles. Employers accept 'vicarious liability' for their employees. This means that provided that the employee is working within their sphere of competence and in connection with their employment, the employer is also accountable for their actions.

Principles of delegation

Delegation must always be in the best interest of the patient and not performed simply in an effort to save time or money

- The PCA must have been suitably trained to perform the task
- The PCA should always keep full records of training given, including dates
- There should be written evidence of competence assessment, preferably against recognised standards such as NZQA unit standards.

Some key questions to ask:

1. Is the delegation in the best interest of the patient? In every case, the context of the situation must be taken into account (e.g. there is a huge difference between a task that is routine and regular for a patient than one that is a "one-off" or first time event).
2. Is the person you are delegating to suitably trained and have they been assessed as competent, preferably with written evidence of the assessment?
3. Are there clear and robust protocols and guidelines in place?
4. Does the task form part of the PCA's job description? – i.e. do they have the authority to perform this task?
5. Do the members of the team know this task has been delegated?

6. Is there sufficient supervision and support available? The PCA must not be put in a situation where they have to make a clinical judgement and act upon that judgement alone.
7. Is on-going training and development available to ensure the PCA remains competent?

The Guideline: Delegation of care by a registered nurse to a health care assistant (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011)²

Indemnity Insurance

It is strongly recommended that an unregulated role such as this, is covered by individual indemnity insurance. NZNO offers membership as a Healthcare assistant, which covers the PCA role, and provides indemnity insurance as part of that membership package.

https://www.nzno.org.nz/membership/indemnity_insurance

Mentoring trainee PCAs

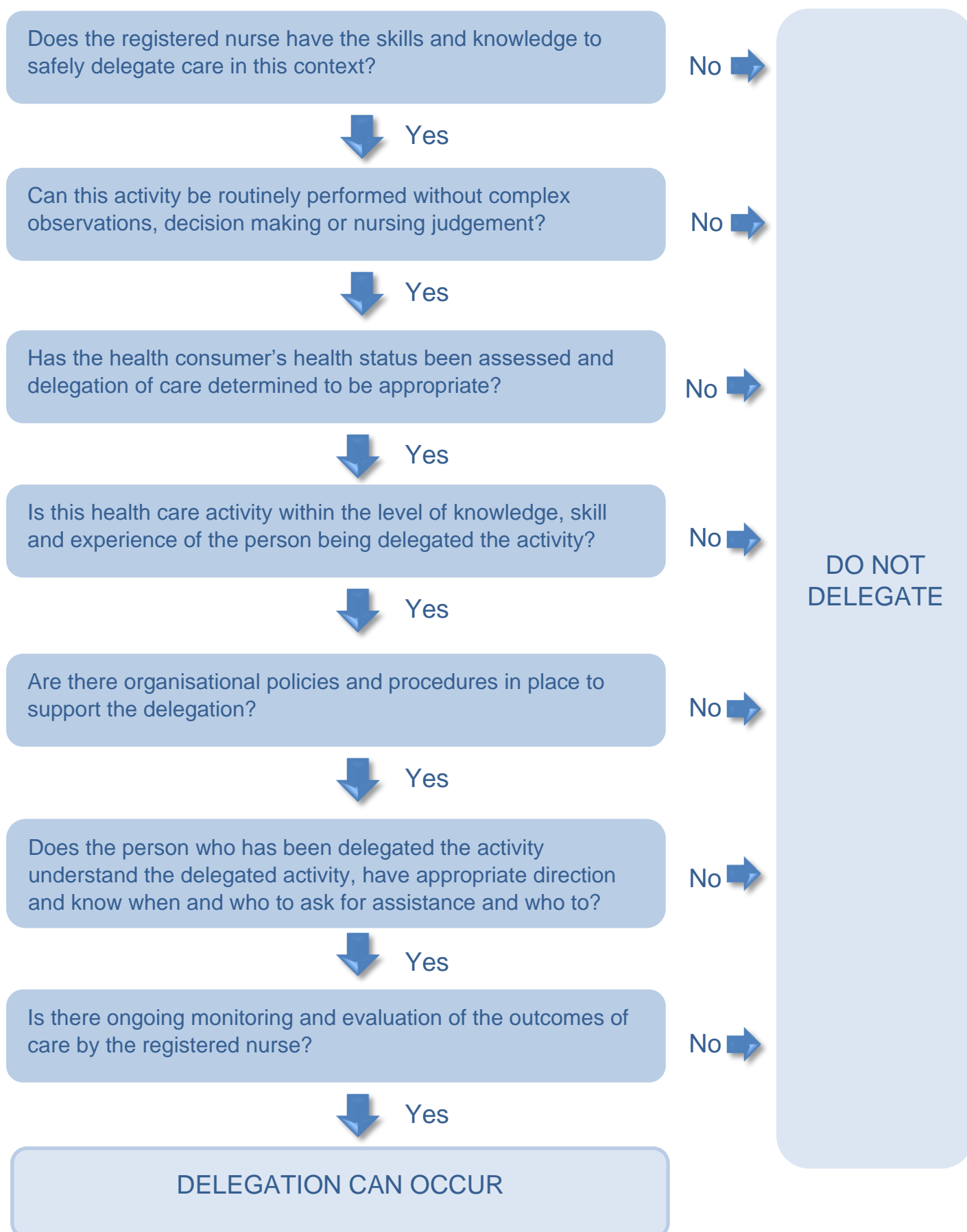
Trainee PCAs will do most of their learning in the workplace, and practically apply the knowledge and skills gained through the online course to their everyday work. It is important to ensure they have adequate support and supervision throughout the training programme with an allocated mentor assigned to each trainee.

During the training programme mentors will be expected to meet weekly with the PCA for a review of learning and to plan learning objectives for the following week. Trainee PCAs are encouraged to keep a learning log to document these. Demonstration and supervision of tasks and subsequent assessment of competence will also be required to ensure that correct processes are adhered to.

PCAs may need extra support with practical assignments and supervision during learning activities, as well as conducting workplace assessments to measure and rate the PCA's learning achievement.

Te Whakarite i nga mahi tapuhi kia tiakina ai te haumarua-iwi
Regulating nursing practice to protect public safety

Decision-making process for delegation by a registered nurse



Check list for the new PCAs

mentors/practice manager

- ☐ Introduce PCA role to all staff at a practice meeting
- ☐ Delegate mentors- RN & administrator – please forward their name/names and email address to Pinnacle MHN Workforce and education lead
- ☐ Mentors to read “Pinnacle PCA information pack” and have an understanding of this position and distribute this pack to all staff members
- ☐ Mentors to read WINTEC course information and content
- ☐ Book and organise weekly one hourly progress and support meeting between mentor and PCA
- ☐ Ensure the PCA has access to a computer in the practice, as the course is an on-line moodle-based programme
- ☐ Mentor and PCA to read and understand NCNZ Direction and Delegation document for PCAs/Registered Nurses
- ☐ Develop an orientation booklet for your practice
- ☐ Slowly work through and sign off any tasks that the PCA may need to complete

