family’s health and development. The knowledge and clinical skills necessary to assess the impact of disability and/or chronic illness on the child’s or adolescent’s physical, psychosocial, and maturational status are essential.

The nurse establishes goals in collaboration with the child or adolescent, the family, and members of the interdisciplinary team. The plans of care then are implemented through direct intervention or delegation. Systematic evaluation facilitates the child’s or adolescent’s progress toward his or her maximal level of function, especially as it changes during the various stages of development. Strong emphasis is placed on development, productivity, and meaningful activities, thus ensuring the smooth transition through an appropriate educational and/or vocational setting.

**Collaborating with all members of the team in the plan of care**

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse collaborates with other professionals, the child or adolescent, and the family in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating an individual interdisciplinary plan of care.

Nursing practice demands sharing and planning with other disciplines to facilitate optimum development. Knowledge of the scope and practice of fellow members of the rehabilitation team is essential to collegial relationships. The team develops an interdisciplinary plan that reflects the expertise of each discipline as well as coordination among disciplines. Because children have so many needs, their plan of care is similarly complex. The team provides a plan that is coordinated, comprehensive, geared toward promoting optimum well being, and designed to meet the needs of the young client and his or her family.

**Participating in research**

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse contributes to nursing and the field of pediatric rehabilitation through participation in research.

As a professional, the pediatric rehabilitation nurse has a responsibility for the continuing development of knowledge and skills in the practice of nursing and rehabilitation. Intra- and interdisciplinary research is essential to this process. Pediatric rehabilitation is best served by a critical analysis of accepted practice through research methodology, and nurses must play an important role in this analysis.

---

**Pursuing professional development**

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse assumes responsibility for his or her continuing professional development. Ongoing professional growth and development is an essential component of pediatric rehabilitation nursing because the field is constantly growing and developing, and the nurse must possess diverse knowledge and skills to meet the complex needs of children, adolescents, and families.

**Providing health education**

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse provides health education for professionals and consumers regarding the health needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Nursing service to the pediatric rehabilitation population requires specialized knowledge and skills beyond a baccalaureate education, and nurses must have the needed expertise to provide advanced nursing care to children/adolescents with disabilities and their families. This expertise includes the ability to observe, conceptualize, and analyze complex health problems; educate others regarding relevant theories and concepts; serve as a role model; evaluate the effectiveness of interventions; and adapt to changing needs and changing environments. The scope of this educational role includes children and families with rehabilitation needs, other healthcare professionals, school and community agencies, and public and governmental agencies.

This description was developed by a subcommittee of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses’ Pediatric Special Interest Group.
Pediatric rehabilitation nursing is the specialty practice committed to improving the quality of life for children and adolescents with disabilities and for their families as well. The mission is to provide, in collaboration with the interdisciplinary team, a continuum of nursing care from injury and diagnosis to productive adulthood. The goal of the rehabilitation process is for children, regardless of their disability or chronic illness, to function at their maximum potential and become contributing members of both their families and society. Physical, emotional, social, cultural, educational, developmental, and spiritual dimensions are all considered in a holistic approach to care. The unique qualities of each child are cherished and fostered.

Pediatric rehabilitation nursing is both specialized and diverse—a combination clearly reflected in the populations the specialty serves. Infants, children, and adolescents with a variety of disabling conditions receive specialized care from pediatric rehabilitation nurses in settings ranging from home to hospital, from clinic to school.

Developmental theory is a cornerstone of pediatric rehabilitation nursing. A major interruption of normal life experiences—which occurs with all developmental disabilities, traumatic injuries, and acute and chronic illnesses and hospitalizations—can jeopardize the child’s growth and development.

Pediatric rehabilitation nurses recognize the importance of family involvement in the young person’s development and are advocates for children and adolescents and their families. The young client and his or her family form the core of the rehabilitation team.

Pediatric rehabilitation is a dynamic field; therefore, pediatric rehabilitation nurses must have a strong commitment to professional growth and development, education, and research. This commitment will enable nurses to maintain current knowledge of the trends and expertise needed in the practice of nursing of children and adolescents with rehabilitation needs.

Roles of the Pediatric Rehabilitation Nurse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Functions as a child and family advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitates the entire family’s transition from hospital to home and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotes community and governmental knowledge of pediatric rehabilitation issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Components of Pediatric Rehabilitation Nurse Practice

Using appropriate theory and content

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse uses appropriate theory and specialized content from the biophysical, psychosocial, behavioral, and developmental sciences as the basis for decision making in rehabilitation nursing practice.

The nursing process provides the systematic approach through which relevant decision making can occur. Related theories and bodies of knowledge include growth and development, biological processes, hierarchy of needs, learning, crisis, family, group dynamics, change and leadership theories, and pharmacokinetics.

Nurses working with children must have an in-depth knowledge of normal growth and development and related assessment skills, as well as a knowledge of interventions that promote developmental milestones. Appropriate communication skills and knowledge of development- and condition-appropriate play are necessary to help the child reach developmental milestones at his or her own pace. Play, the means by which children learn about the world, is an integral part of each child’s rehabilitation plan.

Maintaining professional practice standards

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse maintains professional practice standards by providing nursing interventions that meet individual needs and are consistent with the total rehabilitation program.

Nursing care is designed to restore and maintain health, support adaptive capabilities, and promote independence. The nurse assumes the challenge of helping children, adolescents, and families in making the transition from the hospital to the community and of helping the young client to function in the community. Because of the complex needs of children and adolescents, pediatric rehabilitation nurses have a leadership role as family educators, counselors, and discharge planners.

Children, unlike adults, require services that accommodate their ongoing physical, emotional, social, and educational development. They require special healthcare equipment and environments; they must have healthcare providers, therapists, educators, and nurses with sound clinical and developmental expertise that fosters the attainment of appropriate child/adolescent developmental milestones across the life span.

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse facilitates the family’s emotional adjustment to the rehabilitation and/or habilitation process. A child’s needs cannot be met in isolation; rather, they are viewed in relation to the needs of family members and significant others who are involved in caring for him or her. The community and educational setting in which the child will function also must be considered in any treatment plan.

Approaching crises systematically

The pediatric rehabilitation nurse uses a systematic process to assist children and adolescents and their families in dealing with recurrent actual or potential crises and the impact of these events.

Children and families experience predictable developmental crises and transition states. The impact of these life events can be identified, managed, and evaluated by the nurse, who has the theoretical knowledge to monitor and intervene in promoting the child’s/adolescent’s and