Pediatric rehabilitation nursing is the specialty practice committed to improving the quality of life for children and adolescents with functionally limiting disabilities and illnesses. This is achieved in association with family members who support the growth and development of these children and adolescents into adulthood. The mission is to provide, in collaboration with the interdisciplinary team, a continuum of nursing care from onset of injury or illness to recovery and adaptation. The goal of the rehabilitation process is for children, regardless of their disability or chronic illness, to function at 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 or adolescent are cherished and fostered. Every child is individual and unique. While there may be common need and characteristics that children of a particular age or stage of development share, each child must be understood in his/her uniqueness, and his/her individuality must be respected.

Developmental theory is a cornerstone of pediatric rehabilitation nursing. A major interruption of normal life experiences that occurs with all developmental disabilities, traumatic injuries, and acute and chronic illnesses and hospitalizations can jeopardize the child's development. Therefore, nurses working with children must have an in-depth knowledge of normal development and related assessment skills, as well as knowledge of interventions that promote developmental milestones. Play, the means by which children learn about the world, is an integral part of each child's rehabilitation plan. The family plays a vital role in advocating for the child and is a core part of the rehabilitation team.

Roles of the pediatric rehabilitation nurse
The pediatric rehabilitation nurse may function in the following roles in a variety of settings throughout the continuum of care, including

**Advocate**
- Functions as a child/adolescent and family advocate
- Facilitates the entire family's transition from hospital to home and community
- Facilitates and supports the transition to adult services when appropriate
- Influences public policy and legislation that affect pediatric rehabilitation through active support and/or direct involvement
- Provides health education for professionals and consumers regarding the health needs of children with disabilities and their families

**Coordinator of Care**
- Works as a valued member of the healthcare team
- Brings together the expertise of health professionals and integrates that knowledge into a comprehensive continuum of care
- Facilitates the design and implementation of the child's, adolescent's and/or family's individualized plan of care
- Facilitates the coordination of academic activities (e.g., hospital-based, homebound, return to regular classroom)
- Uses appropriate resources to develop and implement an individualized teaching and discharge plan with the child/adolescent and their family

**Leader and Consultant**
- Provides leadership in the professional practice setting and the profession
- Acts as an agent of change
- Consults with other health professionals
- Delegates responsibilities to other members of the team
• Involves stakeholders in the decision making process and considers factors related to safety, effectiveness, cost, and impact on practice

**Care Provider**
• Implements nursing care based on a sound knowledge base, scientific principles and developmental theories, and a documented therapeutic plan
• Promotes optimal wellness
• Integrates ethical provisions in all areas of practice
• Maintains professional practice standards by providing nursing interventions that meet individual needs and are consistent with the total rehabilitation program

**Health Teaching and Promotion**
• Shares rehabilitation knowledge and skills with patients, families, the interdisciplinary team, and the community
• Offers support to families about the special needs of their children and adolescents with disabilities
• Acts as a resource and role model for nursing staff and students. Leads or participates in activities such as nursing committees and professional organizations that promote the improvement of nursing care and the advancement of professional rehabilitation nursing
• Provides teaching to help cope with and/or prevent health and functional problems

**Team Member**
• Collaborates with other professionals, the child or adolescent, and the family in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating an individual interdisciplinary plan of care
• Collaborates in the development of new service delivery models that best meet the needs of young clients and their families
• Interacts with and contributes to the professional development of peers and colleagues

**Researcher**
• Evaluates existing research in light of current evidence and research findings
• Integrates evidence and research findings into best practices
• Contributes to nursing and the field of pediatric rehabilitation through participation in research. Intra- and interdisciplinary research is essential to continual development of knowledge and skills and to evidence-based practice

**Professional Practice, Education, and Evaluation**
• Attains knowledge, skills and competency that reflect current nursing practice
• Evaluates one's own practice in relation to professional standards and guidelines, relevant statutes, rules and regulations
• Systematically enhances the quality and effectiveness of nursing practice

**Reference**

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses (2014). *Standards & Scope of Rehabilitation Nursing Practice*, (6th ed.). Chicago, IL.


*This role description was originally developed by the Pediatric Special Interest Group of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses in 1992. Subsequent revisions were made in 2007, 2015.*

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