

INTRODUCTION

This manual was developed for the use of all public health nurses in West Virginia and is based upon the philosophy and principles of current practice in public health nursing. It reflects the latest and best scientific knowledge and practice.

Changing health care and health needs along with socioeconomic changes in our society are constantly remolding the practice of public health nursing. The nurse's professional competence must be constantly expanding to embrace new knowledge, new skills and new methods of delivery. Therefore, the public health nurse must possess a high degree of professional competence if he/she is to carry out the many faceted job with skill and imagination. While staff development opportunities and supervisory guidance will assist in the process of new learning and new experience, the individual nurse must take the initiative and assume final responsibility for self-improvement.

The material will be familiar to those of you who have been practicing over a period of years. You have learned through your own resources and by guidance from supervision. Nevertheless, programs and the types of groups which you serve will change. Information on programs will change also, yet some of the basic information in this manual should serve you through many changes of programs. This manual should guide you in recognizing the progress we have already made and provide clues to more meaningful and comprehensive nursing services.

This manual was compiled under the direction and guidance of many wise and wonderful public health nurses throughout the state and the country. This document is intended to be used for orienting new public health nurses and as a refresher course for public health nurses currently on the job.

DEDICATION

“Patients go without care for the want of someone in charge”...

So spoke Florence Nightingale when advising her student nurses to use their new knowledge to manage the care of the sick. Lillian Wald, founder of the Henry Street Settlement Visiting Nurse Association, showed what happens when community health professionals do take charge to attack unhealthy circumstances and subsequently affect patient care for the better. Committed and zealous, the first public health nurses in the United States sought out the poor, visited them in their homes, and were among the first to advocate for better housing and sanitation for families.

This manual is dedicated to all past, present and future West Virginia public health nurses who advocate for healthier communities. These nurses are integral members of the preventive health care team which assesses, assures, and delivers basic public health services for the community.

The Nightingale Pledge

I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully.

I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug.

I will do all in my power to elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my profession. With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to those committed to my care.