



The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nova Scotia. Our mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services by our registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, RNs and NPs unless otherwise stated.

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Our practice support tools are developed using current reference material. The source of this material is available upon request.



Overview of this Information Sheet

This tool is a resource for nurses in all practice settings to help them understand:

- Regulation and authority to regulate
- Self-regulation
- Right-touch regulation
- Regulation versus advocacy

Like all regulatory tools, use this document in conjunction with employer policy, applicable legislation and the standards of practice and code of ethics for LPNs, RNs and NPs.

Regulation

[Regulation](#) is when a [regulatory body](#) formally oversees the activities of its registrants. The functions of a regulatory body include registering, licensing, monitoring and, when necessary, disciplining its registrants appropriately with the goal of ensuring public protection.

Authority to Regulate

NSCN's mandate is to:

- Serve and protect the public interest in the practice of nursing.
- Preserve the integrity of the nursing profession.
- Maintain the public and registrants' confidence in the ability of NSCN to regulate nursing.

In NS, The Nursing Act provides the authority to the profession to:

- Regulate the provision of nursing services and govern its registrants
- Advance and promote the provision of nursing services
- Be accountable to the Minister, the public and the registrants; and
- Do all such other lawful acts and things as are incidental to the attainment of the objects of the college.

NSCN regulates all nurses in Nova Scotia through:

- Registration, licensure, professional conduct and education approval processes.
- Approval and promotion of a code of ethics.
- Establishment and promotion of the standards of practice for nursing, entry-level competencies and a continuing competence program.

Self-Regulation

[Self-regulation](#) is not a right or entitlement, but a privilege granted by government who trusts the profession to act in the best interest of those they serve. If self-regulation fails, the government can remove the right for the profession to self-regulate.

All NSCN programs and services are grounded in the principles of self-regulation:

- Promoting good nursing practice
- Preventing poor nursing practice
- Intervening when nursing practice is unacceptable

The Nursing Act provides NSCN a framework for nurses to participate in self-regulation, and do so through the Board and Regulatory Committees which are comprised of members of the public and active practicing nurses.

We **promote good nursing practice** by setting standards for nursing education, setting registration and licensure requirements and establishing and promoting professional practice standards, competencies and code of ethics.

We **prevent poor nursing practice** by providing nurses with tools and resources to maintain and enhance their competencies and help them to identify issues that contribute to poor practice and potential resolutions.

We **intervene when nursing practice is unacceptable** by addressing complaints received about nursing practice and intervening where necessary. A complaint may be made by a member of the public, a registrant, an employer, the CEO of NSCN or another NSCN employee, or any other person who has concerns regarding the conduct of a nurse. Complaints are reviewed carefully to determine what actions need to be taken and often include an investigation.

Nurses are accountable for their own practice and making appropriate decisions based on their:

- Scope of practice
- Code of ethics
- Standards of practice
- Practice context
- NSCN policies and programs

Right Touch Regulation

As a ‘right-touch’ regulator, we approach our regulatory oversight by applying the minimal amount of regulatory force required to achieve a desired outcome. We seek to understand problems before jumping to solutions and we make sure that our level of regulation is proportionate to the level of risk to the public. The Board and staff of NSCN incorporate [right-touch regulation](#) in all aspects of our work. At NSCN, we aim to be proportionate, consistent, targeted, transparent, accountable and agile.

Regulation versus Advocacy

In our role as the regulator, NSCN cannot participate in advocacy, which includes association or union-based work with the goal to advance the interests of nurses and the profession.

The provincial government has a policy on self-regulated professions that clearly outlines the role of the regulator to serve and protect the public, which is separate and distinct from the advocacy mandate of a professional association. At NSCN, this is outlined in our legislation and in our mandate to serve and protect the public. The NSCN Standards & Guidance and Customer Experience team connect with nurses every day to provide regulatory professional practice guidance and resources. In this work, our goal is to provide guidance to nurses to deliver safe care rather than advocating for changes in the workplace, environment or profession.

Key Points to Remember

- NSCN regulates all nurses in Nova Scotia to serve and protect the public interest.
- Self-regulation is not a right or entitlement, but a privilege granted by government.
- All NSCN programs and services are grounded in self-regulation principles of promoting good nursing practice, preventing poor nursing practice and intervening when nursing practice is unacceptable.
- Nurses are accountable for their own practice while adhering to the standards, code of ethics and regulatory policies set by NSCN.

Suggested Reading

- [Nursing Act](#)

For further information on anything contained within this tool, please contact an NSCN Practice Consultant at practice@nscn.ca.