As a registered nurse\(^1\) (RN) you are a member of a profession that has been granted the privilege to self-regulate. The College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) is the organization that has been delegated the authority to oversee the self-regulation of RNs by the government of Nova Scotia as outlined in the RN Act (2006), and the RN Regulations (2009).

**What is self-regulation?**

Self-regulation recognizes that members of a profession have the specialized knowledge needed to govern themselves with public input. Through self-regulatory mechanisms, the profession registers, licenses, monitors and when necessary, disciplines its members appropriately with the overall goal of ensuring public protection (Schiller, 2014).

There are two levels of self-regulation:

1. The individual level - RNs are accountable for their own practice, adhering to the standards of practice for RNs and NPs and Code of Ethics in all practice settings; and
2. The CRNNS level - We are accountable for supporting RNs to help ensure that the nursing profession acts in the best interest of the public and fulfills the role that has been entrusted to them by government and society (CRNNS, 2011).

If self-regulation fails at either of these levels, the government can remove the right for RNs to self-govern (CNA, 2007; Lahey, 2011).

**How is Self-Regulation Reflected in Daily RN Practice?**

As an RN, you self-regulate in various ways. This could include maintaining a current license to practice, pursuing continuing competence, demonstrating personal accountability, and appropriately reporting unsafe practice.

**How is Self-Regulation Reflected in CRNNS’ Work?**

Our programs and services at CRNNS reflect and are grounded in self-regulation principles which include but are not limited to:

- Promoting good nursing practice,
- Preventing poor nursing practice and
- Intervening when practice is unacceptable.

We promote good practice by setting standards for nursing education programs, defining entry-level competencies, setting licensure requirements, promoting evidence based nursing, recognizing nursing role models, establishing professional practice standards and adopting a code of ethics.

We prevent poor practice by identifying potential risks to client and public safety and offering programs and services to assist RNs to manage or mitigate these risks. This includes providing practice consultations, implementing a continuing competence program, developing resources to support practice and influencing administrative and government policy development that affects the practice of RNs.

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\(^1\) The use of the term “registered nurses” also includes nurse practitioners.
You as an RN have a professional accountability to act in the public’s interest and report unacceptable nursing practice when an issue cannot be resolved at the employer level. The RN Act (2006) and the RN Regulations (2009) grants CRNNS the authority to intervene when nursing practice is unacceptable. Concerns of unsafe RN practice can be reported to us by a colleague, manager, employer, or the public. Concerns received are reviewed, and if required, investigated and action is taken to address complaints about the conduct, competence, health or behavior of RNs licensed to practice in our province. For a more detailed review of CRNNS Professional Conduct review process visit: crnns.ca/complaints-and-concerns/our-investigative-process/

CRNNS services are overseen by a Council, consisting of elected individuals with representation from our membership and the public. Council receives its authority from the RN Act (2006). It sets policy directions impacting the programs and services we provide, and determines how the practice of nursing will be regulated and advanced in the public interest.

The Difference between a Regulatory Body and an Association
A regulatory body’s mandate is to protect the interest of the public first and foremost and an association is a body that promotes the interest of its members and advocates for the profession.

Prior to 2002, the Registered Nurses Association of Nova Scotia (RNANS) was both a regulatory body and an association, which represented both its members and the public. At that time, representing both groups was viewed as a conflict of interest and legislation was enacted in 2002 designating the change from an Association to a College for the RN regulatory body in Nova Scotia. With this change, CRNNS became the body responsible to oversee the regulation of RN practice in Nova Scotia with a mandated focus on public safety.

The role of the association is supported by organizations external to CRNNS. For example, the Canadian Nurse Association (CNA) exists to advance the practice and profession of nursing nationally and unions represent the interest of RNs in the workplace within Nova Scotia.

The Role of RNs and the Public in Self-Regulation
By working together to implement self-regulation, we help to ensure Nova Scotians can place their trust in the RNs who care for them, their families and their communities. Self-regulation is a privilege that requires nurses to govern their profession at an individual RN level and at the CRNNS level.

References


