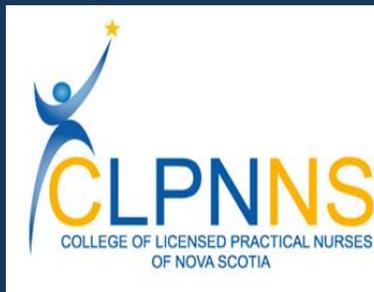


**Guidelines for  
Licensed Practical Nurses  
in Nova Scotia**

**The  
Professional  
Practice Series  
Self-Regulation**

2013

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***Licensed Practical Nurses have core nursing knowledge to independantly care for clients with an established plan of care. Licensed practical nurses are an intregral part of the health care team; accountable to provide safe, competent, ethical and compassionate care to individuals, families and communities.***

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## Introduction

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS), or the College, is the regulatory body for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in Nova Scotia. The College's mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate nursing care. The College sets, monitors and enforces standards for entry into the profession, practical nurse education, registration and professional conduct.

## Using this document

Guidelines are documents that outline the licensed practical nurse's accountability in specific practice contexts. They reflect relevant legislation and are designed to help licensed practical nurses understand their responsibilities and legal obligations in order to they make safe and ethical nursing decisions.

This document is part of *The Professional Practice Series*. It is one document, in a group of documents that have been created to help LPNs and others better understand the scope of practice of the LPN in Nova Scotia. ***Guidelines for Licensed Practical Nurses: Self-Regulation*** was developed to assist licensed practical nurses understand self-regulation. This, as with all College documents, can be used with CLPNNS Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and all applicable practice guidelines or position statements found on the College website at [www.clpnns.ca](http://www.clpnns.ca).

## Context of Care

It is important that LPNs recognize the independence of their practice varies in relation to the context of care, or the sum total of needs of the client, their own individual competence and the supports in the practice environment (CLPNNS, 2012). This means that even though the LPN may have the necessary knowledge and skill to perform an intervention, the overall complexity of care may be such that the judgments relating to the outcome of the intervention (including education, surveillance, monitoring, follow-up assessment or support) are better suited for another care provider with a broader knowledge base, (i.e., RN, NP or MD). As with all aspects of their practice, licensed practical nurses are accountable to recognize a change in the context of care, (e.g. an increase in client acuity, the needs of the client become more variable or exceed their individual capacity or there are a lack of supports in the practice environment), indicates they are required to work in collaboration with, or under the guidance or direction of an appropriate care provider.

## The Licensed Practical Nurse as a Leader

Every LPN in Nova Scotia is expected to demonstrate leadership in their everyday practice as part of meeting their commitment to their Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics (CLPNNS, 2013a, 2013b). Clinical leadership is the demonstration of leadership behaviour (e.g., clinical expertise, effective communication, collaboration and empathy) while providing care (Patrick, Laschinger, Wong & Finegan, 2011). LPNs act as leaders through their advocacy for and contribution to the development and maintenance of quality practice environments. Quality practice settings are required to support safe and effective nursing practice (CNO, 2006).

As leaders, licensed practical nurses are expected to be confident in their knowledge to assess clinical circumstances and articulate client needs to the team. Leadership requires the LPN to step into situations and do their best for the betterment of the client. Starting a difficult conversation, taking action and following up for the sake of improvement of the client, the system, and the profession are leadership actions that require initiative and courage. Everyday leadership is critical to professional growth and confidence.

Licensed practical nurses are expected to reflect on their own practice. Reflection is a method of learning and gaining insight through the critical analysis of one's experiences (Durgahee, 1997). LPNs look back at their actions and at the outcomes that were, or were not achieved. They make decisions about their future practice, based on the reflection or lessons learned from previous practice. Reflection is an important component of leadership and consistent with principles of the Colleges' Continuing Competence Program (CCP). For more information on Leadership, go to <http://clpnns.ca/introducing-the-professional-practice-series-documents-to-support-lpn-practice/>

### **Professional Regulation**

Professional regulation is the process of creating, monitoring, and enforcing regulations that have been formed by legislation for the purposes of establishing standards of conduct for the members of a profession. A profession can be regulated one of two ways: either directly by the government or by the profession itself.

### **Professional Self-Regulation**

Professional self-regulation is when an occupational group formally regulates the activities of its members, (Benton, Gonzalez-Juado & Beneit-Montesinos, 2013; CNA, 2007). Professions self-regulate because their specialized body of knowledge positions them to be most appropriate to develop standards for education and practice and to ensure these standards are met, (Schultze, 2008). In Nova Scotia, all nurses, LPNs, RNs and NPs, are regulated by the profession, or self-regulated.

### **The Goal of Self-Regulation**

Certain professions and occupations perform work of such a nature that if it is carried out in a negligent or fraudulent way, it can be dangerous to the public or contrary to the public interest, (Schultze, 2008). The goal of self-regulation is the delivery of safe and competent services by the members of the profession based on principles that regulations promote good practice, prevent poor practice, and intervene when practice is unacceptable, (CNA, 2007).

### **The Authority to Self-Regulate**

The authority to self-regulate is granted to a profession by the government through law or legislation. A regulatory body is created to facilitate the day-to-day activities of self-regulation as outlined by the legislation. The government in granting the capacity to self-regulate retains some control over the practice of a profession and the services provided by its members, (Randall, 2000) even though the regulatory activities are managed by the regulatory body.

## **The LPN Act**

In Nova Scotia, the LPN Act (2006) authorizes the College to regulate LPNs. The Act outlines the legal capacity that the government has delegated to the College as the regulatory body. The College is expected to develop, implement, and enforce various regulatory standards, processes and policies in exchange for the benefits of professional status associated with self-regulation, (Randall, 2000). These standards, processes and policies create a regulatory framework designed to protect the public by ensuring that services from LPNs are provided in a safe, competent, compassionate and ethical manner.

## **The College's Objectives**

Along with authorizing the College to regulate LPNs, the LPN Act also outlines four objectives or objects. These objects must be met in all of the College regulatory activities:

1. To serve and protect the public interest;
2. To preserve the dignity of the practical nursing profession;
3. To maintain public confidence in the ability of the practical nursing profession to regulate itself, and;
4. To regulate the practice of licensed practical nurses through the development of various processes.

## **Role of the College as the Regulatory Body**

The College develops the framework for self-regulation. To do this, the College: sets standards (for who may enter the profession, for approval of practical nurse education programs, and for the practice and conduct of those working in the profession); creates processes for when and how members may be removed from the profession (Lahey, 2013), and: provides direction and support to LPNs so they may maintain their competence and professional commitment throughout their nursing careers, (CNA, 2007).

The College creates Standards of Practice, establishes a Code of Ethics, develops and implements a Continuing Competence Program, establishes registration, licensing and professional conduct processes and publishes policies and interpretive documents to support the practice of licensed practical nurses in Nova Scotia as part of the self-regulatory framework.

## **Self-Regulation is a Privilege and a Responsibility**

Self-regulation is a privilege. Like all privileges, it can be taken away by the same governmental body that granted it. To keep the privilege, self-regulated professions are accountable to the public and the government to consistently satisfy their objectives of public safety, (CNA, 2007).

Accountability is inherent in the role of the LPN in Nova Scotia. The responsibility to keep clients safe is part of the greater accountability that all LPNs bear. Self-regulation, as a framework for the delivery of safe care, is inherent in the LPNs professional responsibility to practice in the best interest of the client.

## Why Self-Regulation is Important

Self-regulation involves licensed practical nurses regulating their practice in the best interest of the public. LPNs up-hold the standards of practice and code of ethics of the profession as part of the self-regulatory process and in doing so, they earn public trust (CNA, 2007; CRNBC, 2013). Maintaining public trust and confidence is why self-regulation is important.

## Regulation versus Advocacy

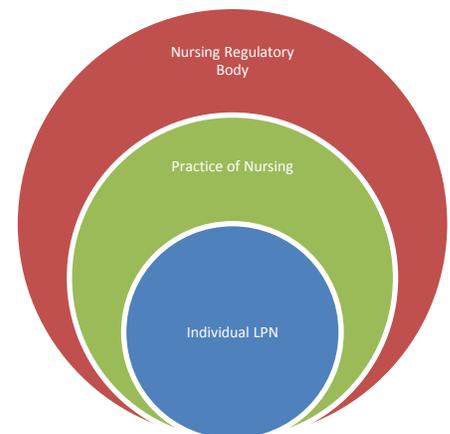
There is significant distinction between regulation and advocacy. The role of regulation is protection of the public through the creation of regulatory framework (standards, code, policy, interpretive documents and process). Advocacy is typically focused on the promotion of the professional interests of the professions members, (Schultze, 2008).

The College assumes some of the advocacy role in the absence of a professional association for LPNs in Nova Scotia. It is important to recognise that the public interest is also served by the protection and promotion of the profession, (Schultze, 2008). Practice supports (e.g. standards, guidelines, documents, policies, and programs) developed by the College are designed to help LPNs understand their practice so that they may make the best decisions possible as part of the delivery of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate care. However, where the interests of the public and the profession compete, professional self-interest must yield to public interest.

The College must ensure that activities are consistent with its legislative mandate and objects as set by the LPN Act. Involvement in activities beyond the profession may be seen as imposing its views on the public, clients, or other stakeholders. The College does not directly involve itself in employer-employee relations or criticize employers' actions, as these activities are not consistent with its objects. There are occasions however, where the College may be asked to serve in a consulting capacity these matters.

## Self-Regulation of Licensed Practical Nurses

The goal of self-regulation is the delivery of safe and competent care. Nurses participate in the self-regulatory process at a variety of levels. At the **regulatory level**, the College participates in self-regulation by developing and approving standards for PN education and programs, entry-to practice competencies, LPN practice and registration processes. These elements set the context and practice expectations to ensure the delivery of safe care. At the **practice level**, nurses participate in the self-regulation process by agreeing to practice according to the standards and processes set by the regulatory body. It is important to note that practicing according to standard or policy is compulsory for every LPN in every practice context. At the **individual professional level**, each LPN participates in the self-regulation process by: being accountable for their own actions at all times; making appropriate decisions based on a decision making framework, practice



context, and employer or College policies, participating in their continuing competence program, (Lahey, 2011), and; working in partnerships to create quality practice environments that support professional practice and client safety, (CNA, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

Self-regulation has been a part of the Canadian health care context since the mid-nineteenth century, (CNA, 2007). Self-regulation is a privilege granted to the practical nursing profession in order to serve the public interest. It is the role and responsibility of the College to ensure that entry into the practical nursing profession in Nova Scotia is protected by strict standards of qualification and that members, once admitted, are regulated by high standards of practice, competence and conduct, (Schultze, 2008). It is also the responsibility of the College to establish a continuing competence program to ensure that LPNs maintain competence through-out their careers. The responsibility falls to each member to continuously improve their competency in the profession to ensure the delivery of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing care to clients, (Vernon, Chiarella, & Papps, 2013).

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