

Verifying a Nurse's Membership Status

Introduction

The College of Nurses of Ontario is the province's regulatory body for the nursing profession. Only those with valid membership with the College have the authority to practise nursing in Ontario.

It is crucial to check the membership status of individuals before they are hired to provide nursing care, and to check each year to confirm they have renewed their membership and are eligible to practise. Doing this protects the public, the integrity of the profession and the reputation of the facilities and organizations that hire nurses.

Failing to confirm a nurse's registration can lead to unintentionally hiring someone who has had her or his membership revoked or suspended. Or, it can lead to hiring an illegal practitioner who has never been a member of the College and may have no nursing education.

This fact sheet outlines the ways in which employers and members of the public can confirm with the College that someone using the title "nurse" is authorized to do so.

Find a Nurse

An online register of members, Find a Nurse, can be found on the College's website (www.cno.org), making it accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In it, employers and the public can search for nurses using first and/or last names, facility names or registration numbers. Every nurse in Ontario has a profile that provides information on her or his membership status. If a nurse has been involved in a disciplinary hearing, and findings were made, then this information is shown here.

If a nurse's profile indicates that she or he is "Entitled to Practise with no Restrictions", this means that the nurse is a current member of the College, there are

no terms, conditions or limitations on the nurse's practice, and she or he can practise nursing in Ontario.

"Entitled to Practise with Restrictions" indicates that the nurse is a current member of the College, but that there are terms, conditions or limitations on the nurse's practice as a result of findings from a Discipline Committee hearing, a voluntary agreement between the College and the member, or because the membership class to which the nurse belongs has restrictions (e.g., the Temporary Class). The nature of the restrictions is indicated in the nurse's Find a Nurse profile.

A notice of "Not Entitled To Practise" means that the nurse does not have the authority to practise nursing in Ontario because she or he does not have a valid membership with the College. The nurse's membership may have been revoked or suspended. If the nurse's registration has been revoked as the result of a disciplinary hearing, then this information is included in Find a Nurse. In addition, nurses who have joined the Retired Class are not entitled to practise.

All members of the College are in Find a Nurse. If you are unable to find an individual in Find a Nurse, the person may be in the register under another name or spelling or, in rare situations, the person may be an illegal practitioner.

Annual Automated Verification of Renewal (AAVR)

Available to organizations year-round, but most often accessed during membership renewal season, the AAVR allows organizations to submit names of nursing staff to the College, which will verify whether the people on the list have up-to-date memberships. It is a useful tool for employers who employ 100 or more nurses, but it is available to all employers. More

information about this service is in the Employer section of the College's website.

Lists of Suspended Members and Illegal Practitioners

On its website, the College maintains lists of members who have been suspended for nonpayment of their annual membership fee. It is a legal requirement that anyone who wants to continue practising nursing in Ontario pay this fee yearly. The individuals whose names appear on this list are prohibited from working in nursing until their outstanding fees are paid.

In addition, a list of people who have tried to secure nursing employment in Ontario without having membership with the College can also be found on the website. Some of the illegal practitioners on this list are former members of the College whose membership has been revoked. Others have never been members of the College, and may not have any nursing education.

Annual Payment Cards discontinued

In 2010, the College stopped issuing an Annual Payment Card (APC) to members. Until this year, nurses received an APC after they completed their annual membership renewal. The card was often incorrectly used as proof of current registration with the College when, in fact, it only indicated payment of fees at a specific point in time. The APC did not reflect changes in a nurse's membership status after it was issued (i.e., if a nurse was suspended, or had her or his membership revoked). Any suspicious APCs should be reported to the College.

Find a Nurse, which is updated continuously, is a more reliable source of valid membership status.

Contact the College

If you are unable to identify a nurse in Find a Nurse, or you do not have access to a computer or the Internet, contact Customer Service at 416 928-0900; toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526.

If you suspect someone of being an illegal practitioner, or you have concerns about an individual's nursing practice, contact the College's Investigator-on-Call at investigations-intake@cnomail.org or 416 928-0900; toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526, ext. 6988.