

Introduction

You and Your College

The College of Nurses of Ontario (the College) is the regulatory body for the province's approximately 150,000 nurses. It works to protect the public interest by supporting nurses in their practice.

Only individuals with a valid Certificate of Registration and current College membership are legally entitled to practise nursing and use the protected titles of nurse, Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) and/or Nurse Practitioner (NP).

Nursing in Ontario is self-regulated, which means that the nursing profession governs itself through the College. It also means that every member is responsible for practising in accordance with the standards of the profession, and for keeping current and competent throughout her or his nursing career. The *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* and *Nursing Act, 1991* provide the legislative framework for nursing in Ontario.

The College's role

On behalf of the nursing profession, the College administers four key regulatory functions.

1. **Articulating and promoting practice standards.** Nursing standards are expectations that contribute to public protection. They inform nurses of their accountabilities and inform the public of what to expect of nurses. Standards apply to all nurses regardless of their role, job description or area of practice.
2. **Establishing requirements for entry to practice.** These requirements assure the public and employers that individuals who enter the nursing profession in Ontario have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to provide safe care.
3. **Administering a Quality Assurance (QA) Program.** Participation in the College's QA Program is a legislative requirement for all Ontario nurses. The QA Program supports nurses in their efforts to practise according to accepted

standards and continually improve their practice. It facilitates practice development in areas that need improvement and serves to increase the public's confidence in the nursing profession.

4. **Enforcing standards of practice and conduct.** Public protection is maintained when nurses are accountable to a set of standards, and members of the public have the opportunity to express concerns about the nursing care they have received. The College can respond to issues about nursing care in a number of ways, including applying disciplinary measures in serious cases of professional misconduct. It makes every attempt to ensure that the resolution, investigation and hearing processes are efficient as well as fair to all parties.

How the College supports members

The College provides practice consultations and a wide range of practice-related documents. It facilitates the membership process through online services and offers opportunities to participate in the self-regulation process. Members can volunteer to participate in College projects and programs, such as the Outreach Program; nominate and elect Council members; and apply to be appointed to a College statutory Committee. Here are some of the services the College provides its members.

The College's website, www.cno.org

On the website, members can:

- read and download a variety of College documents at no cost, including:
 - the *Compendium*, which contains all of the practice standards and guidelines,
 - the quarterly magazine *The Standard*, and
 - QP, a newsletter for nurse employers;
- visit the Learning Centre to:
 - review interactive learning modules to assess and update their knowledge of practice documents,
 - sign up for teleconferences to discuss new practice documents and current practice issues with subject experts and other nurses, and

- discuss their nursing questions with a College Practice Consultant or Outreach Consultant;
- renew their annual membership, pay their membership fee and update their address information;
- volunteer to participate in a College program or project;
- keep up-to-date on nursing policy initiatives; and
- download QA Program tools.

The Outreach Program

This multi-dimensional program provides ways for nurses to engage in self-regulation. It offers tools and supports to help members practise according to the College's practice standards.

Through the Outreach Program, the College collects feedback from nurses about practice standards. It develops tools to help members reflect on their practice, and provides opportunities for nurses to discuss and share strategies for managing nursing practice issues.

A College Outreach Consultant leads each of the program's seven sector-specific Advisory Groups:

1. Academic
2. Acute care—adult
3. Community/public health
4. Long-term care/rehabilitation/complex continuing care
5. Mental health/correctional services
6. Paediatrics—continuum of care
7. Palliative care

Council

The College's governing Council is composed of nurses who their peers have elected, and members of the public who the provincial government has appointed. Council establishes, in accordance with legislation, the goals and objectives of the College, and makes decisions in the public interest. It also makes policy decisions about how the nursing profession is regulated. The nurses on Council bring practice expertise to the decision-making process.

Statutory Committees

To support its regulatory functions, the College has six statutory Committees comprised of nurses and public members. The Committees are:

- Inquiries, Complaints and Reports. Screens complaints made by the public, evaluates

information the College receives through reports and then determines the appropriate actions.

- Discipline. Holds public hearings into allegations of professional misconduct and incompetence. The hearing panels determine what penalties and/or conditions need to be imposed.
- Executive. Makes decisions between the quarterly Council meetings and functions as the Patient Relations Committee for the College's Patient Relations Program.
- Fitness to Practise. Holds hearings when a nurse is alleged to have a mental or physical condition or disorder that affects her or his ability to provide safe, competent care.
- Quality Assurance. Promotes member engagement in the QA Program to ensure quality nursing practice. It also monitors nurse participation in continuing competence endeavours.
- Registration. Determines whether an applicant is qualified to practise nursing in Ontario.

Contacting the College

Direct a general inquiry, such as a membership renewal question, to the Customer Service Centre.

Or, report a home or business address change.

Phone 416 928-0900 or 1 800 387-5526. Or, e-mail **cno@cnomail.org**. The Customer Service Centre is open from 0830 to 1700 hrs, Monday to Friday.

Have a question about how to apply a specific standard to your practice setting? Discuss it with a College Practice Consultant by phoning the Practice Support Line at 416 928-0900, ext. 6397; or toll-free at 1 800 387-5526, ext. 6397. Or, e-mail **ppd@cnomail.org**.

To discuss an enforcement issue with a College Investigator, phone 416 928-0900, ext. 6988; or 1 800 387-5526, ext. 6988. Or, e-mail **investigations-intake@cnomail.org**.

For more information

Contact the College of Nurses of Ontario at:

E-mail: **cno@cnomail.org**

Tel.: 416 928-0900

Toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526

Fax: 416 928-6507

Website: **www.cno.org**