

What is CNO? Self-Regulation



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO
ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

Introduction

The College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) is the regulatory body for nursing in Ontario. Its mission is to protect the public's right to quality nursing services by providing leadership to the nursing profession in self-regulation.

Your College

Established by, but at arm's length from, the provincial government, CNO decides the *criteria for becoming a nurse* in Ontario and the *standards of practice* that must be met to maintain that designation. Only those with a valid Certificate of Registration from the College can practise as a nurse in Ontario and use the titles nurse, Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) or Registered Nurse-Extended Class [RN(EC)].

The College has about 140,000 members and is the largest group of health professionals in Ontario. RNs account for almost 80 percent of this total and RPNs make up the remaining 20 percent; they belong to the *General Class*. About 650 Registered Nurses belong to the *Extended Class* and are also known as *primary health care nurse practitioners*. A *Retired Class* for both categories came into effect in 2001.

There are 21 regulatory health colleges in Ontario for professions such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. Under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA), CNO and all other health colleges must do the following for their respective professions:

- decide what education and other qualifications are necessary to become a member;
- establish the standards of practice with which members must comply;
- administer quality assurance programs that members are required to participate in to help maintain their competence; and
- provide a complaint and investigation process

for people who feel that the standards have not been met.

In Ontario, the RHPA and the *Nursing Act, 1991*, provide the legal framework for nursing as a self-regulating profession and give CNO the responsibility for carrying out nursing regulations to protect the public interest. Self-regulation means that the profession governs itself through the College and in the sense that individual members are responsible for practising in accordance with the standards of the profession and for keeping current and competent throughout their nursing careers.

Nurses play a major role in regulating their profession through the College. Nurses form the majority of CNO's elected governing Council, the body that makes the important policy decisions about how the profession will be regulated. Council consists of 39 members, 21 of whom are nurses elected by their peers from across Ontario (14 RNs and seven RPNs). The other 18 members are members of the public appointed by the provincial government. The Council president, elected by Council, may be either an elected or appointed member, but the two vice-presidents must comprise an elected RN and an elected RPN.

CNO staff act as a resource for Council, helping to develop and implement Council's decisions. Many of the staff at the College are nurses.

Supporting the Council in its work are seven *statutory committees*. These committees are composed of elected RNs, RPNs and appointed public Council members. The committees are required by RHPA and include the following:

- **Client Relations Committee:** works to enhance the relationship between the public and nurses and administers the College's abuse prevention program.

- **Complaints Committee:** reviews results of investigations of complaints received about members' nursing practice and determines appropriate action.
- **Discipline Committee:** holds hearings into allegations of professional misconduct referred by the Complaints or Executive Committees. Hearing panels determine penalties or conditions to be imposed.
- **Executive Committee:** makes decisions between the quarterly Council meetings and plays an important role in investigating concerns reported to the College.
- **Fitness to Practise Committee:** holds hearings when a nurse is alleged to have a mental or physical condition affecting her or his ability to practise safely and competently.
- **Quality Assurance Committee:** administers a program to assure the quality of nursing practice and nurses' ongoing competence.
- **Registration Committee:** assesses applicants' qualifications to practise nursing in Ontario.

CNO provides *leadership* to the profession by establishing standards of practice that all nurses are expected to follow. In addition, the College helps nurses maintain their competence from year to year through the *Quality Assurance (QA) Program*.

One component of the QA Program is *Reflective Practice*, which is designed to help nurses identify their strengths and put together a learning plan to address areas that need development. Annual participation in Reflective Practice is mandatory for all nurses practising in Ontario.

A second component of the QA Program is *Practice Review*. It is an objective assessment of a nurse's practice in relation to a set of competencies that have been identified as essential for safe, effective and ethical nursing practice. Each year, nurses are randomly selected to participate in Practice Review.

For more information

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