

# Complaints and Discipline Participative Resolution Program



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

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

## Introduction

As the regulatory body of the province's nursing profession, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) has a statutory responsibility to investigate all complaints received about a nurse's practice or behaviour. Investigating complaints is one way the College addresses concerns about the quality of care provided by nurses in Ontario.

## Participative Resolution Program

The Participative Resolution Program (PRP) is an alternative to the complaint investigation process. It allows the complainant, nurse and College to work together to create solutions that satisfy everyone involved. PRP aims to resolve complaints in ways that effectively protect the public interest. It is also in keeping with the College's efforts to encourage quality improvement in nursing practice and reflects a trend toward non-adversarial means of dealing with conflict.

## The process

When the College receives a complaint, it is screened for suitability for PRP. If the complaint is found suitable, the College, together with the nurse and the complainant, explore the option of engaging in PRP. Everyone must agree to participate before the process can begin.

A CNO investigator facilitates the resolution. Other College staff may become involved as the process unfolds. For example, a CNO Practice Consultant may assist with educational training and affirming the standards of practice.

There is no charge for the parties involved, other than possible educational training or courses agreed to as part of the resolution. In such cases, either the nurse or the employer, if the employer is involved,

will incur this cost as part of her/his commitment to continuing education.

The complainant, nurse or College has the option to discontinue PRP for any reason at any time. If PRP has been terminated, the complaint will proceed through the complaint investigation process.

## What cases are suitable for PRP?

Many complaints about nursing practice or conduct are eligible for resolution through PRP; however, complaints involving abuse, fraud or criminal conduct are usually *not* suitable.

Here are some examples of cases resolved through PRP:

- All staff on a unit attended an educational session facilitated by a CNO Practice Consultant. The focus of the session was to discuss issues of medication administration and the systemic issues that may create obstacles for nurses to safely and effectively administer medication.
- Practice Consultants provided a presentation covering the therapeutic nurse-client relationship as it pertains to client conditions that require the administration of oxygen and to communication with family members.
- Members agreed to complete courses related to the specific concerns raised in the complaint. The member or employer is responsible for covering the cost of these courses, and the member is responsible for providing proof of completion to the College.
- Members agreed to attend an educational session about the requirement for intervening in and/or reporting situations of alleged abuse. Strategies for meeting this professional responsibility were discussed.

## The resolution

The examples above show that any reasonable proposal can be explored and can result in the final resolution of a complaint as long as everyone involved agrees and the College believes it is in the public interest. Many types of resolutions are possible and depend on the circumstances of the case. Further options for resolving complaints through PRP may include:

- a letter acknowledging the incident and indicating an understanding of the distress it caused the client/family;
- the nurse, complainant and College meeting to discuss the issues in a non-confrontational, collaborative manner; and
- policy changes or initiatives set forth by the employer to improve overall nursing care.

Final resolution requires the complainant and the nurse to agree that PRP will bring closure to the matter. Usually, everyone involved signs a ***Participative Resolution Agreement*** that specifies what solutions and outcomes have been agreed on. Both the complainant and the nurse are provided with a copy of the signed agreement. The agreement, together with the letter of complaint and any additional information, must be reviewed and approved by the Complaints Committee.

Information regarding complaints that are resolved by PRP is retained. The final agreement is not made available to the public, nor is the information used in future College proceedings. Final agreements are, however, considered when assessing whether PRP is a viable option in future complaints made against a nurse.

## For more information

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