

What is CNO?

Developing Practice Standards and Guidelines



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

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

What are practice standards and guidelines?

There are many ways in which the nursing profession, through the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), regulates itself to protect the public. One of the most important obligations of CNO is to establish practice standards and guidelines for how nurses do what they do in an effective, safe and ethical manner. Nurses are legally obliged to adhere to these practice standards and guidelines and maintain competence throughout their careers.

Why do we need practice standards and guidelines?

The practice standards and guidelines set out the College's expectations for members' conduct and practice. The major components are professional standards, practice standards and guidelines, and legislation and regulations.

CNO produces a variety of documents that explain practice standards and expectations. Some apply to all practising nurses. Examples include the *Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship*, *Culturally Sensitive Care* and *Documentation*. Other documents address specific practice issues, such as *Utilization of Unregulated Care Providers (UCPs)* and *Complementary Therapies*. When drafting practice standards, the profession is entirely **self-regulating**. The decision to produce a standards document is made by the College's elected and appointed Council members and is based on trends in health care and nursing and on the needs of nurses. It is written by nurses working at the College who consult extensively with nurses in a variety of practice settings. The final document is reviewed and adopted by Council in an open meeting.

Standards and guidelines are consistent with

legislation that is relevant to the practice of nursing in Ontario (e.g., the *Health Care Consent Act*). Regulations made under the *Nursing Act, 1991*, cover a variety of topics such as the quality assurance obligations of all nurses and professional misconduct. The *Regulated Health Professions Act* provides the legal framework for nursing as a self-regulating profession. One element of that framework is the controlled acts model. Controlled acts are actions or procedures that, if performed by an unqualified person, could potentially harm a client. The *Nursing Act* identifies the controlled acts that nurses have the authority to perform. It also includes a scope of practice statement that describes, in a general way, the practice of nursing.

When creating new legislation and regulations, the provincial government makes the final decisions, but the College provides comments and recommendations or, in the case of regulations, drafts the content before the regulations are forwarded to the government for final approval.

Steps in developing practice standards and guidelines

1. The need for a new practice standard or guideline, or for the revision of an existing one, is identified through inquiries made to the College, complaints or other communication from nurses or the general public. Emerging trends in the health care environment may demand the development of new standards or guidelines. New or amended legislation may also require the revision of existing standards or guidelines.
2. A literature search and consultation with key informants is carried out to inform the development of a practice standard or guideline, and to incorporate current evidence-based information.

3. A draft standard or guideline is developed, usually by the College's Practice Consultants, with expert professional assistance if required.
4. CNO consults with Ontario nurses and, when appropriate, with employers, client groups, nursing organizations and governmental agencies — anyone who may be affected by the standard or guideline. Consultation takes place through focus groups, surveys and workshops. The standard or guideline is then revised as a result of the feedback obtained.
5. A final draft of the standard or guideline is adopted by CNO Council.
6. If the standard or guideline applies broadly throughout the nursing profession, it will be mailed with the College journal *The Standard* and circulated to all nurses registered in Ontario. Guidelines that are not general documents will be featured in the journal, and nurses who could benefit from the documents are encouraged to order them from CNO.

Changing standards and guidelines

Practice standards and guidelines are always evolving to keep pace with the rapid changes occurring in the health care sector. College staff and Council members, as well as nurses and employers, constantly monitor the practice standards and guidelines to ensure that they fit with the reality of the workplace and continue to safeguard the public.

For more information

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