



Discussion Note – December 2021 Council

Modernizing Practice Standards

Contact for Questions or More Information

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Introduction

We are seeking Council's input on key considerations and next steps to support modernizing CNO's practice standards.

Public Interest Rationale

Modern standards act as a proactive contributor to inform nurses of their accountabilities in safe nursing practice, thereby reducing the chance of patient harm.

Strategic Outcome

Modernizing practice standards supports the implementation of CNO's [Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#). Specifically, modernized practice standards advance CNO's strategic outcome so that *nurses' conduct will exemplify understanding and integration of CNO standards for safe practice*.

Informed by evidence, the objectives of this initiative are to ensure practice standards are:

- accessible (clear and easy-to-understand)
- defensible (evidence-informed, measurable) and
- relevant (reflect contemporary practice to prevent risk, informed by stakeholders, and meet stakeholder needs).

Background

In [March 2021](#) and [June 2021](#), Council reviewed and provided feedback on a draft evidence-informed¹ framework to guide CNO's standards modernization.

¹ Literature (academic, grey), environmental scan, legislative analysis, and preliminary stakeholder perspectives. Refer to the March 2021 and June 2021 briefing note for more information.



At the [June 2021](#) Council meeting, Council discussed the importance of clearly articulating nurses' accountabilities in the practice standards and guidance, including addressing issues related to health equity. It was noted that maintaining guidance, such as decision trees, would be important practice resources if specific practice standards were to be retired. Council confirmed that the framework will support CNO in becoming a more proactive regulator.

In [September 2021](#), Council discussed the importance of practice standards in articulating nursing accountabilities as the health care environment evolves, such as addressing changes in technology, informatics, and care delivery. Council highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement, including involving employers and nurses working in non-traditional nursing roles so that modern standards reflect evolving nursing practice. It was noted that retaining salient concepts from existing practice standards would be an important consideration as the project evolves.

This work continues to evolve and be informed by many sources of evidence including:

- literature,
- jurisdictional scans,
- data analysis to identify risk of harm to the public,
- consultation with CNO teams and,
- preliminary stakeholder perspectives.

These sources of evidence have led to the development of a conceptual diagram, key features of a modern standard, and a stakeholder engagement strategy for 2022.

A Conceptual Diagram

Based on the evidence gathered to date, a conceptual diagram² has been developed to guide this work and illustrate the connectivity of the following elements:

- The goal of Modernizing Practice Standards, which is to promote safe nursing practice in the interest of patient safety
- The entry-level competencies as foundational to the practice standards
- The *Code of Conduct* as the central “hub” of the practice standards
- Topic specific practice standards as “spokes” supporting the *Code of Conduct* and
- The objectives of modern standards: accessible, defensible and relevant.

The *Code of Conduct* will be updated to be more robust and comprehensive to reflect the universal accountabilities applicable to every nurse. The topic specific practice standards that support the *Code of Conduct* are evidence-informed and reflect areas of risk in nursing practice. For example, approximately 9% of all inquiries received in Professional Conduct to date in 2021 reflect issues related to the therapeutic nurse-patient relationship, such as abuse issues and boundary violations. In another example, many of the questions Practice Quality received from nurses and stakeholders in 2021 are about scope of practice. In general, internal College data supports retaining and modernizing the following topic specific practice standards:

- *Confidentiality and Privacy: Personal Health Information*

² The conceptual diagram will be shared during the December 2021 Council presentation.

- *Consent*³
- *Decisions About Procedures and Authority*⁴
- *Documentation*
- *Medication*
- *Nurse Practitioner and*
- *Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship.*

In 2022, other practice areas will be further explored. For example, stakeholder input and additional evidence will help to inform focused areas of modern standards such as diversity, equity and inclusion and virtual care. These topic specific standards will continue to evolve as additional evidence is gathered.

Key Features of a Modern Standard

Based on the evidence gathered to date, the following key features of a modern standard have been identified. These key features will guide and support a consistent approach to modern standard development, which include:

- **An accessible format:** which will be accessible through a variety of methods for a variety of stakeholders
- **A brief introduction:** which describes the purpose of the standard and will outline any applicable legislation
- **Nurses' professional accountabilities:** which will be communicated by listing key principles that are accessible, defensible and relevant. The number of principles and accountabilities will vary depending on the content of the practice standard but will be succinct and contain only key information
- **Embedded links to additional resources:** which will support application of the practice standard
- **A link to a single, online glossary:** which will provide a list of definitions universally used across practice standards and resources, instead of separate glossaries in individual practice standards and resources
- **Appendices (if applicable)**

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2022

In 2022, a wide range of stakeholders will be engaged, including but not limited to nurses, the public, employers and key informants in diversity, equity and inclusion. The engagement will involve the following:

- **January to March 2022:** Introducing the initiative and communicating the conceptual diagram to stakeholders

³ Consent is currently a practice guideline and will be transitioned to a practice standard.

⁴ The practice standard "Decisions About Procedures and Authority" will need to be further explored and the final title will be changed so that it is more clearly understood.

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- **April to September 2022:** Consulting on a draft updated *Code of Conduct*, a draft topic specific practice standard, and usability and dissemination strategies and co-designing diversity, equity and inclusion content
 - **October to December 2022:** Communicating the updated *Code of Conduct* and a topic specific practice standard

It will be important for us to remain agile as we assess the health care environment to determine if stakeholders are prepared for engagement, given the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the change to modern standards will also impact stakeholders in a variety of ways. Therefore, we are proposing a soft launch, where modern standards would be communicated to stakeholders in advance but would not take effect until a later date to allow them the time to prepare for the change. This transition period will allow for system changes and readiness.

This stakeholder engagement strategy affirms CNO's [Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#) by creating a foundation for successful stakeholder collaboration to understand the health care system and risks to patient safety.

Next Steps

- In 2022, Council can expect:
 - Ongoing updates on the Modernizing Practice Standards project
 - Update on the stakeholder engagement and communication strategies
 - An updated Code of Conduct and
 - A topic specific practice standard.

Questions for Council

- What key considerations does Council have for CNO staff as the modernizing standards project progresses?