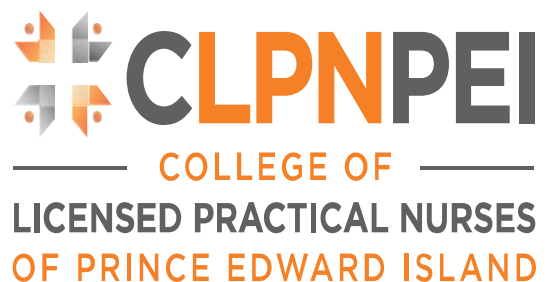


Practice Directive
Cannabis

**College of Licensed Practical Nurses of
Prince Edward Island**

**College of Registered Nurses and Midwives
of Prince Edward Island**

June 2024



Introduction

The College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of Prince Edward Island (CRNMPEI) and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Prince Edward Island (CLPNPEI) are legislated to serve and protect the public interest through the regulation of individual registered nurses (RN), nurse practitioners (NP) and licensed practical nurses (LPN). For the purposes of this document the term nurse(s), will refer to all three designations of nurses in Prince Edward Island. The Colleges' mandate is to ensure Prince Edward Islanders receive safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical care from nurses.

This collaborative practice directive was created to assist nurses to understand their accountabilities and to provide practice guidance¹, so they may meet their standards of practice and code of ethics when caring for clients.

How do clients obtain Medical Cannabis in Prince Edward Island?

The *Cannabis Act* and *Cannabis Regulations* came into force on October 17, 2018. This legislation governs the use of both recreational and medical cannabis. In Prince Edward Island the *Cannabis Control Act* was enacted on October 17, 2018 to further establish prohibitions relating to the purchase, possession, sale, distribution, consumption, cultivation, propagation and harvesting of cannabis for recreational purposes.

Under the legislation, clients must consult with an authorized healthcare practitioner to obtain a signed Health Canada Medical Document or similar form² to gain access to medical cannabis. In Prince Edward Island, nurse practitioners and physicians are authorized to issue the medical document. Under the *Cannabis Regulations* clients can access medical cannabis by:

- purchasing directly from a federally licensed seller;
- registering with Health Canada to produce a limited amount of cannabis for their own medical purposes;
- designating someone to produce it for them;
- if clients are over the age of 19 they can purchase directly at the PEI Cannabis stores, including through their online sales platforms.

Standard of Practice and Code of Ethics

The following are core regulatory documents that guide nursing practice in Prince Edward Island:

Standards for Nursing Practice (2018);

Nurse Practitioner Standards for Practice (2019);

Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (2017);

Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada (CCPNR, 2020);

Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada (2024).

¹ These directives do not apply to clients who have been prescribed a synthetic cannabinoid (e.g. nabilone).

² For NPs, the activity of providing a medical document to authorize medical cannabis is referred to as prescribing.

These statements are the minimal expectation for any nurse in any setting or role. They serve as a guide to the professional knowledge, skill and judgement needed to practice nursing safely.

When providing care to clients who are using or are interested in using medical cannabis, nurses are accountable to follow their standards of practice, specifically relating to:

- Respecting client diversity;
- Respecting a client’s right to informed consent;
- Optimizing the client’s role in decision-making and the care process;
- Advocating for and following appropriate organizational policy.

	REGISTERED NURSES	LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES
APPLICABLE STANDARD	Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Code of Ethics (2017)	Standard 3: Protection of the public through self-regulation CCPNR Code of Ethics (2023) Principle 2: LPNs provide care that is physically, psychologically, and culturally safe. Principle 3: LPNs provide and advocate for client dignity, autonomy, and self-determination.
WHAT IT SAYS	Nurses recognize, respect and promote a person’s right to be informed and make decisions. Each RN and NP respects and promotes clients’ rights to informed decision- making and informed consent. RNs and NPs have a legal and ethical responsibility to respect a client’s informed choice, which includes choices related to lifestyle and treatment.	3.3. Lead and contribute to a practice culture that promotes safe, inclusive and ethical care LPNs respect a client’s rights, recognizing their diverse backgrounds, values, and beliefs.(3.1). LPNs assist, support, and respect a client’s informed decision - making, including when factors reduce the client’s capacity to make decisions.(3.3). LPNs recognize a client’s right to take reasonable risks, which is essential to their dignity and overall quality of life. (3.6).

WHY IT IS RELEVANT	The nurse’s role is to ensure clients have the information they require to make informed decisions about their health. Nurses accomplish this by presenting information in an unbiased and factual manner, ensuring all questions are answered and referring clients to other appropriate sources as necessary.
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	REGISTERED NURSES	LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES
APPLICABLE STANDARD	<p>Standard 2: Competent Application of Knowledge</p> <p>Standard 3: Responsibility and Accountability</p>	<p>Standard 2: Evidence-informed Practice</p>
WHAT IT SAYS	<p>Nurses use comprehensive assessment, critical inquiry, technology, and research to provide competent nursing services relevant to the area of practice (2.1);</p> <p>Each nurse has the current knowledge, skill and judgement needed to practice in her or his setting (3.3).</p>	<p>LPNs attain and maintain evidence-informed knowledge to support critical thinking and professional judgement (2.1);</p> <p>LPNs integrate knowledge of trends and issues in healthcare and society into evidence-informed practice (2.2)</p>
WHY IT IS RELEVANT	<p>Each nurse is accountable to know the process by which clients are authorized to use medical cannabis, indications for use, routes of administration, adverse effects, dosing and contraindications. Nurses should be aware of any new research or evidence relating to medical cannabis and advocate for appropriate policies.</p> <p>All nurses should advocate for continued research to establish a base of evidence for practice related to medical cannabis. The NP and RN (including the RN manager or educator) is accountable to integrate research into practice. All nurses are accountable to evolve their practice based on evidence.</p>	

	REGISTERED NURSES	LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES
APPLICABLE STANDARD	Standard 3: Responsibility and Accountability	Standard 1: Professional Accountability and Responsibility Principle 1: LPNs promote optimal health and well-being.
WHAT IT SAYS	Each nurse practices in accordance with the RHPA and its Regulations (3.2) and responds to and reports situations which may be adverse for clients and/or health care providers, including incompetence, misconduct and incapacity of registered nurses and or health care providers (3.8).	LPNs practice within applicable legislation, regulations, by-laws, and employer policies (1.1). LPNs identify and minimize risks to clients, adhering to client safety principles and quality assurance measures (1.6).
WHY IT IS RELEVANT	The nurse is obligated to report if they become aware a client has obtained medical cannabis using channels other than the legislation, if a physician or nurse practitioner has not followed appropriate policy, or of any other unlawful activity. The duty to report may be a simple discussion with the client or physician/nurse practitioner to seek clarity or it could mean reporting the issues to the manager or regulatory body.	

Ethical Dilemmas

If nurses are morally opposed to medical cannabis as a treatment, they may have difficulty in providing this treatment to clients. If the nurse can anticipate a conflict with their conscience (conscientious objection) they have an obligation to inform their manager as soon as possible. The nurse has the right to follow their conscience in these situations; however, if the treatment plan is in keeping with professional practice, the nurse must care for the client until an appropriate alternative arrangement can be made to meet the client’s needs. For more information please see CRNMPEI and CLPNPEI Practice Directive: Duty to Provide Care.

Nurse Practitioners Accountabilities When Prescribing Medical Cannabis

Under the *Cannabis Regulations*, NPs are defined as health care practitioners authorized to prescribe medical cannabis for clients as part of their treatment plan. In Canada,

cannabis is prescribed by a NP or physician by completing Health Canada's Medical Document. This document provides the necessary information for the NP to prescribe medical cannabis and for the client to obtain medical cannabis.

NPs who prescribe medical cannabis must:

- Have the necessary individual competence and education;
- Educate clients on the risks, side effects, safe transportation and storage of cannabis;
- Educate clients on the importance of obtaining their cannabis from an authorized supplier;
- Follow employer policy
- Only provide medical documents for cannabis to clients under their direct care.
(Nova Scotia College of Nurses, 2022).

Administration of Medical Cannabis

The *Cannabis Regulations* authorizes all nurses, including those working in home care settings, to possess and directly administer medical cannabis to clients who have authorization to use it. Employer policy should indicate practice settings where nurses are permitted to engage in activities relating to the administration of medical cannabis. Nurses are expected to be aware of their employer policies.

Nurses are expected to have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment (competence) to be able to directly administer medical cannabis safely. This includes the following:

- Ensuring a client-specific order authorizing the nurse to administer;
- Ensuring the medical cannabis is appropriately labeled;
- Competently administering or assisting with the administration of the medical cannabis;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the medical cannabis;
- Identifying and managing adverse reactions;
- Accurately documenting outcomes;
- Supporting clients to manage their own health;
- Storing, transporting and disposing of medical cannabis properly;
- Being aware of the employer policy;
- Educating clients on how to safely store.

Administration of Medical Cannabis produced by Client/designate

The nurse may be asked to administer or assist with administration of cannabis produced by the client or a designate. The nurse must consider the risks to the client associated with the administration of any client supplied medication, including medical cannabis. The nurse should take reasonable steps to ensure the integrity and safety of these types of medications. The nurse should be guided by employer policies relating to the administration or assistance of the administration of medical cannabis which is produced by the client/designate.

Self-Administration of Medical Cannabis

When the client wishes to self-administer medical cannabis, including preparing and storing their own medical cannabis, the nurse must assess the client's capacity (e.g., judgment, memory, understanding, functional ability) and collaborate with the client (and family, if required) to establish and document a plan for self-administration. This plan should include the provision of all relevant knowledge (e.g., dose, frequency and route, expected outcomes, potential adverse effects, and ways to monitor the expected and unexpected effects of the medical cannabis).

Clients should be assessed regularly for their capacity to self-administer medical cannabis or other medications. As with all assessments, these must be documented appropriately according to agency policy. If the client cannot participate in the administration, the responsibility may be assumed by a family member. A nurse may be expected to assist the family member. For example, the nurse may prepare the medical cannabis and pass it to the family member for administration.

Nurses should be familiar with agency policies (e.g. restrictions on practice, and documentation) related to self-administration of any medication including medical cannabis.

For further information related to medication administration see:

- [Practice Directive: Medication Administration](#)

Nurses Accountabilities if Using Medical Cannabis as Part of Their Own Treatment Plan

Fitness to practice means the nurse has the necessary physical, mental, and emotional health to provide care that meets the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. Nurses are accountable to assess their fitness to practice and to meet their standards of practice, regardless of their medical condition and treatment plan.

If a nurse has been authorized by a health care practitioner to use medical cannabis, they are accountable to assess their fitness to practice on an ongoing basis. If the nurse has determined that the use of medical cannabis is preventing them from meeting their standards of practice or providing safe and competent care, the nurse should refrain from practice immediately and have a discussion with their manager.

If the nurse determines their fitness to practice is not impacted by their use of medical cannabis, they may be able to continue to work. This is no different than another prescribed medication, for example an opioid for chronic pain, which may also impact the nurse's ability to meet the standards of practice.

The nurse should discuss fitness to practice with the health care professional who authorized the use of medical cannabis to create a safe plan for working while being treated with medical cannabis.

If the nurse is not able to self-assess their own fitness to practice, they may require

input from others who can determine if the nurse is able to provide safe, compassionate, competent, and ethical care. Resources which may be useful include:

- Primary care provider
- Employee assistance program
- CRNMPEI / CLPNPEI
- Employer policy

Nurses Recreational Use of Cannabis

Mood-altering substances, such as cannabis or alcohol, can impair a nurse's ability to think clearly, make sound judgments and affect their ability to provide safe and competent care. Cannabis may affect everyone differently so nurses must assess their fitness to practice after using any mood-altering substance. Under the Regulated Health Professions Act the conduct of a nurse may be found to be incompetent where the nurse is impaired by illness, addiction, or other incapacity. Nurses are expected to practice safely, and clients trust they will not be exposed to nurses whose abilities may be impaired (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2023).

If a nurse suspects a colleague is impaired, ensuring client safety is the main priority. The manager or supervisor must be notified immediately, and all actions must be documented thoroughly. They may need to be removed from the practice environment to ensure client safety (Nova Scotia College of Nurses, 2022). A nurse who has knowledge or reasonable grounds to believe that the conduct of another regulated health professional constitutes professional misconduct or incompetence must report the circumstances and provide any additional information to the Registrar of the Regulated Health Professionals College.

Conclusion

Nurses providing care to clients who are, or are interested in, using cannabis must have knowledge of the treatment, respect client diversity and their right to informed decision-making, and ensure there is appropriate organizational policy. This practice directive, in addition to consultation and support from the Colleges, can help nurses meet their standards of practice and provide safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing care to Prince Edward Islanders. If you have additional questions, please call the CRNMPEI at (902) 368-3764 or the CLPNPEI at (902) 566-1512.

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