

Practice Directive

Transition to Practice

College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of
Prince Edward Island

June 2024



Approved by Council on June 26, 2024

Background

This document has been developed to support a safe transition into being a Registered Nurse (RN) in Prince Edward Island (PEI). A transition to being a RN in PEI extends beyond an initial registration and orientation at the chosen facility. This document should be used in collaboration with the employer's orientation, policies, and programs.

College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of Prince Edward Island

The College of Registered Nurses & Midwives (CRNMPEI) is the regulatory body for registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and midwives in PEI. The Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) gives CRNMPEI the authority to regulate these professions in a manner that serves and protects the public interest. The regulatory functions of CRNMPEI, under the RHPA, include member registration, discipline, and approval of education programs. CRNMPEI protects the public and ensures all nurses in PEI have the competence they need to practice safely, competently, ethically, and compassionately.

CRNMPEI is involved in the transition to practice by conveying the requirements and expectations of being a regulated health professional. They communicate the standards of nursing practice, the scope of practice, entry-level competencies, code of ethics, and other self-regulatory requirements.

The affairs of CRNMPEI are governed by a nine-member council, which consists of six registrants (mixture of RNs, NPs, RMs) and three public representatives. The decisions of the council are carried out by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and CRNMPEI staff members. Council also oversees several committees, including the hearing committee, the investigation committee, the NP advisory committee, and the RM advisory committee. Please refer to CRNMPEI's website for opportunities to be involved with council and the various committees.

The role of a college is very different than the role of an association or a union. CRNMPEI does not participate in the advocacy of nursing, that is the role of an association or union. The goal and purpose of associations and unions is to advance the interests of nurses and the profession. The purpose of the college is to protect the public.

Self-Regulation

Registered Nurses are self-regulated health professions. Self-regulation means that RNs are accountable for their own practice, and they must make appropriate decisions based on their scope of practice, code of ethics, standards of practice, practice context, and CRNMPEI policies and bylaws. Each RN is responsible for maintaining competence, fitness to practice, and integrating new knowledge and skills into their own practice. Self-regulation recognizes that nurses are the most qualified individuals to regulate the profession and to determine the standards of nursing practice.

Standards of Nursing Practice, Code of Ethics, and Entry Level Competencies

It is important for all nurses working in PEI to understand and meet all key regulatory standards, including the code of ethics, standards of nursing practice, and entry level competencies. These documents can be found on CRNMPEI's website.

Standards of Nursing Practice

A standard is an authoritative statement that sets out the legal and professional basis of nursing practice. The primary purpose of standards is to identify the desired and achievable level of performance expected of nurses in their practice. The five standards that form the foundation of CRNMPEI's Standards for Nursing Practice, in addition to the Code of Ethics, are:

- Unique body of knowledge
- Competent application of knowledge
- Responsibility and accountability
- Advocacy
- Continuing competence

The Standards for Nursing Practice are based on the following philosophy and principles:

- The client is the central focus of the professional service nurses provide, and is a partner in the decision-making process and ultimately makes their own decisions
- Improvement is a necessary component of practice, and the public interest is best served when nurses continually improve their application of knowledge, skill and judgment
- The public has entrusted CRNMPEI to honour the social contract that we have made with Canadians to act in the public interest through the licensing and regulation of its members
- Quality practice settings contribute to the provision of competent and professional service
- The goal of professional nursing service is the outcome desired by the client that poses no unnecessary exposure of risk of harm

Code of Ethics

CRNMPEI has adapted the Code of Ethics from the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). It is a statement of the ethical values of nurses and of nurses' commitments to persons with healthcare needs and persons receiving care. The Code of Ethics is both aspirational and regulatory. It is an aspirational document designed to inform everyone about the ethical value and subsequent responsibilities and endeavours of nurses. It is also a regulatory tool. Nurses are among the most trusted health professionals in Canada. The Code of Ethics help to maintain trust between nurses and the public by articulating the ethical responsibilities that nurses must uphold and promote.

Entry Level Competencies

Entry-level competencies define the education, knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of every nurse in Prince Edward Island entering the profession. Each entry-level competency is defined as "an observable ability of a registered nurse at entry-level that integrates the knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment required to practice nursing safely and ethically." Entry level competencies establish the foundation for nursing practice. Nurses are expected to maintain and increase their practice capacity beyond the entry-level competencies over the lifetime of their career.

Entry level competencies are used by regulatory bodies for a number of purposes including:

- Academic program approval/recognition
- Assessment of internationally educated applicants

- Assessment of applicants for the purpose of re-entry into the profession
- Input into the content and scope of entry-to-practice exams
- Practice advice/guidance to clinicians
- Reference for professional conduct matters
- Public and employer awareness of the practice expectations of registered nurses

CRNMPEI's website also has numerous policies and practice directives available. These should be used to guide the new nurse's practice in Prince Edward Island.

Jurisprudence

Jurisprudence is the concept of understanding and being knowledgeable about the legislative and policy requirements for nurses who are registered with CRNMPEI. Successful completion of the jurisprudence exam is required prior to registration renewal during the first year of registration. All applicants who have never written the PEI jurisprudence exam are required to write the exam during their first year of practice in PEI.

Continuing Competence Plan

The RHPA requires CRNMPEI to establish a continuing competence program for all registrants to complete to demonstrate that they have the qualifications and competence to practice in a manner that is conducive to the protection of the public. Continuing competence is the ongoing ability of a RN to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, judgement, and interpersonal attributes required to practice. Assessment of continuing competence assures the public that the nurse can practice safely, ethically, and competently.

Each nurse will have to complete a continuing competence plan by renewal each year. Step-by-step instructions on how to complete this plan is available on CRNMPEI's website under policies. It is important to reflect on the Standards of Nursing Practice and Code of Ethics to identify specific areas of learning that may require additional competence. The nurse should set specific goals related to the identified gaps and set timelines for completion.

Identifying and Minimizing Risks

All nurses are expected to use their professional knowledge and judgement to identify and minimize risks when engaging in nursing practice. New registered nurses should identify learning gaps and how to access available resources to minimize risk. It is also important to understand the employer's expectations and policies for the specific area of practice. Minimizing risk enhances client safety and improves the ability to meet the standards of nursing practice.

Nova Scotia College of Nurses (2023) developed a framework to recognize and minimize risk by considering three factors: the client, the nurse, and the environment.

Factors regarding the client:

- Does the client have complex care needs?
- Are the health outcomes of the client predictable?
- Could there be a negative effect on client outcome(s) if the intervention/ procedure is not implemented correctly or if the intervention/procedure does not occur?
- Are there multiple steps/interventions where potential errors could occur?

- Are the interventions complex?
- Is there potential for miscommunication of information to others involved?

Factors regarding the nurse:

- Is this practice within the nurse's professional scope of practice?
- Is this practice within the nurse's individual scope of practice?
- Does the nurse have the required competencies in this practice?
- Does the nurse have sufficient training in this practice? Has the nurse had an opportunity to apply the theory learned into practice?
- Can the nurse manage all potential outcomes?
- What interventions can the nurse put into place to minimize risk?

Factors regarding the environment:

- Is this practice within the nurse's scope of employment?
- Who and where are the resources and supports? Are they available onsite or remotely?
- Are there employer resources available such as policies, procedures, and guidelines to provide practice guidance?
- Is there access to collaborating health care professionals?

By considering these three factors, it can help the nurse determine and minimize risk.

Professional Concerns

All nurses should recognize and attempt to resolve any concerns that may have potential negative impacts on clients. If a concern compromises the care of the client, prevents the delivery of safe, competent, and ethical nursing care, or encourages behaviour that is not consistent with the standards of nursing practice, code of ethics, or employer policy than it should be identified. If a nurse is aware of one of these issues, it is their responsibility to recognize and attempt to resolve it, as the RHPA legislates a duty to report for all nurses.

Some examples of professional concerns are breaching confidentiality, showing patterns of unsafe practices, altering documentation, and working short staffed.

If a nurse identifies a concern, they should:

- Attempt to resolve the issue by accessing available supports.
- Discuss the concern with all involved individuals, the appropriate manager or supervisor, and with CRNMPEI or another appropriate regulatory body.
- Document the concern, including the actions taken to resolve the issue. The client health record may not be the appropriate place to document the concern unless the concern has a direct impact on the client. Follow employer policy to determine the appropriate place to document.
- Contact Canadian Nurse Protective Society (CNPS) to seek a legal opinion.

- Reflect on the issue, what was learned, and if anything should have been done differently.

Transition Shock

Becoming a newly registered nurse in PEI is a transition. Many nurses find their first few months both exciting and stressful as they learn to navigate putting their theoretical knowledge into practice and adapting to a new professional role. Transition shock is when the nurse moves from a known, comfortable setting (eg: student nurse or working in a different country) to a setting of more unpredictability and unknowns. The new nurse should be aware of transition shock and that it is a normal challenge and can impact the successful integration into the workplace.

Nursing the Future (2023) listed common signs of transition shock. They are:

- Feeling anxious
- Fear of failure
- Feeling like they are not good enough or they are an imposter
- Isolation
- Fatigue
- Lack of hope

Initial integration into nursing takes time and practice. The primary goal during these early stages is to gain an understanding of the policies, procedures, available resources and supports, and the expectations of the employer. Being familiar with these documents will help the environment feel like a safe place, which will allow the nurse to practice the fundamentals of nursing in a competent and compassionate manner.

Role of the Employer

The employer provides crucial experiences for newly licensed nurses so it is important the environment is supportive and conducive to learning. Employers may advocate for new nurses by:

- Providing a mentorship program. Ideally, a single preceptor should be assigned to the new nurse and their schedules should be the same. New nurses find it frustrating to have several preceptors who provides contradictory advice and information to them. The mentorship program should be flexible in length, so it is directly tied to the need of each individual nurse (Government of Canada, 2024); however, a time of at least 12 months is ideal (Health PEI, 2017).
- Including entry level competencies and nursing standards throughout the employer orientation.
- Promoting all professional development opportunities in a way that is easily accessible to newly registered nurses.
- Prioritizing educational opportunities and professional development experiences for employees.
- Ensuring strong interdisciplinary practice and collaboration within the healthcare team with an emphasis on strong communication.
- Providing opportunities for new nurses to meet with other new nurses and nurse leaders to discuss challenges and issues. This also allows the leadership team to be more visible and transparent.

Tips for Success

The new nurse should:

- recognize the limits of their practice during this time of transition and stay within those limits.
- use the information discussed above to identify and minimize risk. For example, the new nurse should limit overtime shifts, request a consistent schedule to work with a consistent group of co-workers, and limit floating to other practice areas.
- accept accountability of being an independent practitioner but also be responsible to their clients and co-workers.
- maintain boundaries while understanding the concept of therapeutic relationships.
- not hesitate to ask questions and for clarification.
- set priorities and develop time management skills while gradually increasing the workload.

References

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