

FAQ: The Code of Conduct for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners

1. What is the purpose of the Code of Conduct?

The College of Nursing of New Brunswick's (CNNB) *Code of Conduct for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners* ("Code of Conduct") describes the behaviour and conduct that registered nurses and nurse practitioners (RNs/NPs)¹ are required to uphold when practising nursing in New Brunswick (N.B.) or providing nursing services to clients² in the province. It defines the expected level of performance for safe, competent, compassionate and ethical nursing practice.

The Code of Conduct is intended to inform RNs/NPs and the public of the foundational nursing values and principles that guide nursing practice, and the accountabilities that all RNs/NPs have to clients, employers, colleagues, and the public.

2. What is the difference between the Code of Conduct and a code of ethics?

The Code of Conduct sets out clear and actionable expectations for professional behavior that apply to all RNs/NPs. From a regulatory perspective, it articulates behavior and conduct that can be applied across regulatory processes to support safe, competent, compassionate and ethical nursing practice. In contrast, a code of ethics serves as a guide for ethical relationships, behaviors and decision-making, and supports RNs/NPs in navigating ethical challenges that arise in practice.

3. What is the difference between the Code of Conduct and the standards of practice?

The Code of Conduct describes professional conduct for RNs/NPs, to which they are accountable. The standards of practice provide more detailed guidance on specific areas of nursing practice, for example the *Standards for Documentation*. RNs/NPs are expected to use both the Code of Conduct along with the CNNB standards of practice to guide their practice. Failure to practice in accordance with the Code of Conduct and the standards of practice may be considered professional misconduct.

¹ The CNNB is responsible for regulating registered nurses (RNs), graduate nurses (GNs), nurse practitioners (NPs) and graduate nurse practitioners (GNPs) in New Brunswick, as such the abbreviation "RNs/NPs" is used in this document and refers to all forementioned designations. Licensed practical nurses (LPNs) in New Brunswick are regulated by the Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses.

² Clients are individuals, families, groups, communities or populations who require nursing services. In some settings, other terms may be used such as patient or resident. In education, the client may also be a student; and in research, the client may be a subject or participant.

The Code of Conduct replaces the *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses*, but all other standards remain in effect. Refer to the [CNNB standards of practice](#) for all standards that apply to nursing practice in N.B.

4. Does the Code of Conduct apply to all RNs/NPs?

All RNs/NPs are responsible for understanding the Code of Conduct's principles and are accountable for applying them to their nursing practice, regardless of their role, title, responsibility, and domain of practice. Additionally, the Code of Conduct applies to any method of delivery of services related to nursing practice, such as in-person or virtual (e.g. telephone, video conference, etc.).

RNs/NPs are expected to use the Code of Conduct along with relevant federal and/or provincial legislation, standards of practice and other documents, and organisational requirements to guide their nursing practice.

5. My employer has a code of conduct. As a nurse, which code am I accountable to?

RNs/NPs are accountable to both the CNNB and their employer. They are responsible for ensuring their practice and conduct align with the Code of Conduct and the standards of practice set by the CNNB, and the accountabilities and expectations established by the employer.

Inquiries regarding employer-specific code of conduct should be directed to the employer. For guidance regarding the CNNB Code of Conduct, please contact consultation@cnnb-opinb.ca.

6. How do RNs/NPs use the Code of Conduct in their daily practice?

The Code of Conduct serves as a reference for RNs/NPs, shaping their decision-making, promoting public safety, guiding their practice, and fostering professionalism in all their interactions. It consists of six principles, each supported by a set of statements of core behaviours that RNs/NPs are accountable to uphold. Together, these elements provide clear expectations for professional accountability, inclusive and culturally safe care, effective collaboration, and the maintenance of public trust in nursing practice.

7. How are RNs/NPs expected to be accountable to the Code of Conduct when faced with limited resources?

Difficult situations like working short staffed, working overtime, or being reassigned to another practice setting can challenge RNs/NPs' ability to practice safely, competently, compassionately, and ethically. When faced with a difficult situation, RNs/NPs are expected to

maintain their level of professional practice by practicing in accordance with the Code of Conduct and reasonably doing everything they can to meet their professional responsibilities.

In these situations, it remains important that RNs/NPs:

- maintaining professionalism;
- apply professional knowledge and judgment;
- accept accountability and take action to ensure fitness to practice;
- promptly communicate unsafe situations to supervisors/managers, and any treatment-related risks to the primary care provider;
- provide the best possible services by assessing and prioritizing client needs and collaborating and delegating to others;
- document client safety concerns; and
- propose solutions to support safe, ethical, compassionate and ethical nursing practice.

Refer to the practice resource [Working with Limited Resources Toolkit](#) for further guidance to support professional practice.

8. What should RNs/NPs do if they are unsure about how to uphold a particular principle or expected core behaviour?

As a self-regulated professional, if there is a principle or behaviour that a RN/NP is unfamiliar with, they are expected to gain the necessary knowledge in that area. This may be attained through reading articles, attending a presentation, or completing a course related to the topic.

The RN/NP could also consult the glossary of bolded terms provided near the end of the Code of Conduct along with a bibliography to seek additional information on key concepts and terminology. In addition, the CNNB Nurse Consultants are available to provide further clarity related to principles and behaviours of the Code of Conduct and to support RNs/NPs who have questions or concerns about upholding the Code of Conduct in their practice at consultation@cnnb-opinb.ca.

9. What resources are available to support the new Code of Conduct?

The CNNB has a series of resources to support the application of the Code of Conduct, including:

- an [e-bulletin](#);
- a [Code of Conduct webpage](#);
- a [Code of Conduct webinar](#) to help understand its key features and application; and

- [practice consultations](#) to answer questions from the RNs/NPs, employers, external collaborators and the public.
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Acknowledgements-

The content of this document has been adapted with permission from the College of Nurses of Ontario's [Code of Conduct FAQs](#); and the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador's [FACT SHEET Code of Professional Conduct: Frequently Asked Questions](#).