



*The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs), registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nova Scotia. Our mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services by its registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, RNs, RPNs and NPs unless otherwise stated.*

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Our practice support tools are developed using current reference material. The source of this material is available upon request.



## Overview

This tool is a resource for registrants in all practice settings to help them understand:

- Regulation
- Right-touch regulation
- NSCN’s authority to regulate
- Self-regulation
- Registrant’s accountability
- Regulation versus advocacy

Like all regulatory tools, use this document in conjunction with employer policy, applicable legislation and the standards of practice and code of ethics for nurses.

## Regulation

[Regulation](#) occurs when a [regulatory body](#) formally oversees the activities of its registrants. The functions of a regulatory body include registering, licensing, monitoring and, when necessary, addressing concerns about a registrants practice with the goal of ensuring public protection.

## Right-Touch Regulation

As a ‘[right-touch](#)’ regulator, NSCN approaches regulatory oversight by applying the minimal amount of regulatory intervention required to achieve a desired outcome. This means seeking to understand problems before jumping to solutions and making sure the level of regulation is proportionate to the level of risk to the public. We aim to be proportionate, consistent, targeted, transparent, accountable and agile.

[Regulatory Guiding Principles](#) rooted in the philosophy of right-touch regulation have been developed to support the application of right-touch regulation and shape the future of NSCN’s work.

## Authority to Regulate

In accordance with the Nursing Act and Regulations, the Nova Scotia government has delegated the authority to oversee self-regulation of nurses to NSCN.

### **NSCN’s mandate is to:**

- Serve and protect the public interest in the practice of nursing.
- Preserve the integrity of the nursing profession.
- Maintain public and nurses’ confidence in the ability of the profession to regulate itself.

### **In Nova Scotia, the Nursing Act provides authority to NSCN to:**

- Regulate the provision of nursing services and govern its registrants.
- Advance and promote the provision of nursing services.
- Be accountable to the Minister, the public and registrants.
- Do all such other lawful acts and things as are incidental to the attainment of the objects of the college.

### **NSCN regulates all nurses in Nova Scotia through:**

- Registration, licensure, professional conduct and education approval processes.
- Approval and promotion of a code of ethics.
- Establishment and promotion of the standards of practice for nursing, entry-level competencies and a continuing competence program.

# Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is not a right or entitlement, but a privilege granted by government who trusts the profession to act in the best interest of those they serve. If self-regulation fails, the government can remove the right for the profession to self-regulate.

All NSCN programs and services are grounded in the principles of self-regulation:

- Promoting good practice
- Preventing poor practice
- Intervening when practice is unacceptable

NSCN **promotes good practice** by setting standards for entry-level education, setting registration and licensure requirements and establishing and promoting professional practice standards, competencies and code of ethics.

NSCN **works to prevent poor practice** by providing registrants with tools and resources to maintain and enhance their competencies and help them to identify issues that contribute to poor practice and potential resolutions.

NSCN **intervenes when practice is unacceptable** by addressing complaints received about a registrants practice and intervening where necessary to determine appropriate remedial or disciplinary actions.

## Registrants' Accountability

As self-regulated professionals, registrants are accountable for their own practice and making appropriate decisions based on their:

- Scope of practice
- Code of ethics
- Standards of practice
- Practice context
- NSCN policies
- Employer policies and procedures

The Nursing Act provides NSCN with a framework for registrants to participate in self-regulation. This work is done through the Board and Regulatory Committees which are comprised of members of the public and active practicing nurses.

## Regulation versus Advocacy

Registrants of a self-regulated profession have an ethical and legal duty to put the interests of clients and the public ahead of their own interests.

NSCN's goal is to provide guidance to registrants to deliver safe care rather than advocating for the profession.

NSCN is not an association, or a union and cannot participate in advocacy to advance the interests of nurses and the profession.

An **association** is responsible for the promotion of the profession and the professionals within it. Currently in Nova Scotia there is the Nova Scotia Nurses Association and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Nova Scotia.

A **union** is an organization which supports employees within the employer-employee relationship. This includes but is not limited to staffing ratios, compensation and wages and other workplace issues.

## Key Points to Remember

- NSCN regulates our registrants to serve and protect the public interest.
- As a 'right-touch' regulator, NSCN approaches regulatory oversight by applying the minimal amount of regulatory intervention required to achieve a desired outcome
- Self-regulation is not a right or entitlement, but a privilege granted by the government.

- All NSCN policies and services are grounded in the principles of self-regulation including promoting good practice, preventing poor practice and intervening when nursing practice is unacceptable.
- Registrants are accountable for their own practice while adhering to the standards, code of ethics and regulatory policies set by NSCN.
- NSCN is not an association, or a union and cannot participate in advocacy to advance the interests of nurses and the profession.

## Suggested Reading

- [Nursing Act](#)
- [Jurisprudence Information](#)

For further information on anything contained within this tool, please contact an NSCN Practice Consultant at [practice@nscn.ca](mailto:practice@nscn.ca).