

# Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada

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COLLEGE OF  
LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR  
LPNS - A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO QUALITY CARE

## Foreword

The Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators (CCPNR) is a federation of provincial and territorial members who are identified in legislation, and responsible for the safety of the public through the regulation of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).

The Council of the CCPNR recognized the need for a single standards of practice across member jurisdictions. The Standards of Practice are authoritative statements that define the legal and professional expectations of LPN practice. In conjunction with the Code of Ethics for LPNs, they describe the elements of quality LPN practice and facilitate mobility through inter-jurisdictional mutual understanding and agreement of expectations and requirements for practice. This document also serves as a guide for curriculum development and for public and employer awareness of the practice expectations of the LPN.

A steering committee from the representatives of all jurisdictions who license and/or regulate LPNs across Canada (with the exception of Quebec) was identified to guide and advise the project. One World Inc. was commissioned to research and develop the standards in collaboration with the steering committee. This document was validated by the LPN community and key stakeholder groups across Canada and was approved by the Boards of the respective regulatory authorities of the CCPNR's Board members. The CCPNR thanks all participants who contributed to the creation of this document.

The CCPNR approves and adopts the standards of practice for the LPN outlined in this document.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Available in French under the title:

Normes de pratique des soins infirmiers et infirmières auxiliaires autorisé(e)s au Canada

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June 18th, 2013 – CLPNNL adopted the Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators (CCPNR) documents “Standards of Practice for LPNs in Canada” and “Code of Ethics for LPNs in Canada” as the documents required under the *Licensed Practical Nurses Act (2005)* and Regulations. These documents will come into effect for LPNs in Newfoundland and Labrador as of January 1st, 2014.

# STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES

## Preamble

The Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)<sup>1</sup> in Canada provide a national framework for LPN practice. The Standards of Practice are authoritative statements that define the legal and professional expectations of licensed practical nurse practice. In conjunction with the Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses, they describe the elements of quality LPN practice and facilitate mobility through inter-jurisdictional mutual understanding and agreement of expectations and requirements for practice.

The four broad *standards* are applicable to LPNs in all settings in which they practice. They provide the benchmark to which LPNs are measured. *Indicators* accompany each standard and describe more specifically the expectations for LPN practice. Neither the standards nor the indicators are in any order of priority.

As members of a self-regulating profession, LPNs are personally responsible for meeting the Standards of Practice. The legislative responsibility for setting, monitoring and enforcing the Standards of Practice lies with the provincial and territorial regulatory authorities.

The policies and practices of employing organizations do not relieve LPNs of accountability to meet these standards of practice.

Where the legislation and this Standards of Practice document conflict, legislation will apply.

## Standards of Practice

1. PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY
2. KNOWLEDGE-BASED PRACTICE
3. SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC AND SELF-REGULATION
4. ETHICAL PRACTICE

## Principles

Six *principles* provide the foundation on which the Standards were developed.

1. LPNs are self-regulating and accountable for providing safe, competent, compassionate and ethical care within the legal and ethical framework of nursing regulation.
2. LPNs are autonomous practitioners and work collaboratively with colleagues in health care to assess, plan and deliver quality nursing services.
3. LPN practice is client centred and includes individuals, families, groups and communities.
4. LPN standards are broadly based and address variations in client needs, provider competence, experience and environmental factors.
5. LPN standards allow for growth in the profession to meet changing approaches, treatments and technologies within the health care system.
6. LPN standards encourage leadership through self-awareness and reflection, commitment to individual and professional growth, and promotion of the best possible service to the public.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the term “licensed practical nurse” also refers to “registered practical nurse.”

# STANDARD 1: Professional Accountability and Responsibility

Licensed Practical Nurses are accountable for their practice and responsible for ensuring that their practice and conduct meet both the standards of the profession and legislative requirements.

## Indicators:

LPNs:

- 1.1. Practice to their full range of competence within applicable legislation, regulations, bylaws and employer policies.
- 1.2. Engage in ongoing self-assessment of their professional practice and competence, and seek opportunities for continuous learning.
- 1.3. Share knowledge and expertise with others to meet client needs. There is a requirement that knowledge and expertise be shared with respect to client needs. This also applies to mentoring and preceptor situations.
- 1.4. Recognize their own practice limitations and consult as necessary.
- 1.5. Identify and report any circumstances that potentially impede professional, ethical or legal practice.
- 1.6. Take action to avoid and/or minimize harm in situations in which client safety and well being are compromised.
- 1.7. Incorporate established client safety principles and quality assurance/improvement activities into LPN practice.
- 1.8. Advocate in the interest of the public for continuous improvements in licensed practical nursing practice and health care environments that promote client-centred care. Expect nurses to advocate as such.
- 1.9. Practice in a manner consistent with ethical values and obligations of the Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses.
- 1.10. Maintain documentation and reporting according to established legislation, regulations, laws, and employer policies.
- 1.11. Advocate for and participate in the development of policies and procedures that support evidence-informed LPN practice.

## STANDARD 2: Knowledge-Based Practice

Licensed Practical Nurses possess knowledge obtained through practical nurse preparation and continuous learning relevant to their professional LPN practice.

### Indicators:

LPNs:

- 2.1. Possess current knowledge to support critical thinking<sup>2</sup> and professional judgement.
- 2.2. Apply knowledge from nursing theory and science, other disciplines, evidence to inform decision-making and LPN practice.
- 2.3. Access and use relevant and credible information technology and other resources.
- 2.4. Review and integrate relevant nursing research findings into LPN practice.
- 2.5. Maintain awareness of current trends and issues in health care and society that impact client and nursing outcomes.
- 2.6. Evolve their own LPN practice in response to changes and new developments affecting the profession.
- 2.7. Demonstrate understanding of their role and its interrelation with clients and other health care colleagues.
- 2.8. Collaborate in the development, review and revision of care plans to address client needs and preferences and to establish clear goals that are mutually agreed upon by the client and the health care team.
- 2.9. Provide holistic licensed practical nursing care considering the whole person, the environment and the concepts of health promotion, illness prevention, health maintenance, restoration and protection.
- 2.10. Recognize how LPN practice environments and other environmental factors affect professional practice and client outcomes, and develop/modify care plans to assure client safety and well-being.
- 2.11. Use critical inquiry<sup>3</sup> to assess, plan and evaluate the implications of interventions that impact client outcomes.
- 2.12. Practice in a culturally competent<sup>4</sup> manner.
- 2.13. Modify and communicate to appropriate person changes to specific interventions based on the client's responses.

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2 An active and purposeful problem-solving process. It requires the practical nurse to advance beyond the performance of skills and interventions to provide the best possible care, based on evidence-informed practice. It involves identifying and prioritizing risks and problems, clarifying and challenging assumptions, using an organized approach to assessment, checking for accuracy and reliability of information, weighing evidence, recognizing inconsistencies, evaluating conclusions and adapting thinking. Assessment Strategies Inc. Exam Blueprint (2012).

3 This term expands on the meaning of critical thinking to encompass critical reflection on actions. Critical inquiry refers to a process of purposive thinking and reflective reasoning whereby practitioners examine ideas, assumptions, principles, conclusions, beliefs and actions in the context of nursing practice. The critical inquiry process is associated with a spirit of inquiry, discernment, logical reasoning and application of standards. (Brunt, 2005; Jurisdictional Collaborative Process, 2006)

4 Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

## STANDARD 3: Service to the Public and Self-Regulation

Licensed Practical Nurses practice nursing in collaboration with clients and other members of the health care team to provide and improve health care services in the best interests of the public.

### Indicators:

LPNs:

- 3.1. Engage clients in a therapeutic nurse-client relationship as active partners for mutual planning of and decisions about their care.
- 3.2. Collaborate with clients and co-workers in the analysis, development, implementation and evaluation of LPN practice and policy that guide client-focused care delivery.
- 3.3. Support and contribute to an environment that promotes and supports safe, effective and ethical practice.
- 3.4. Promote a culture of safety by using established occupational health and safety practices, infection control, and other safety measures to protect clients, self and colleagues from illness and injury.
- 3.5. Provide relevant and timely information to clients and co-workers.
- 3.6. Demonstrate an understanding of self-regulation by following the standards of practice, the code of ethics and other regulatory requirements.
- 3.7. Attain and maintain professional registration/licensure with the regulatory authority of the jurisdiction in which they practice.
- 3.8. Practice within the relevant laws governing privacy and confidentiality of personal health information.

## STANDARD 4: Ethical Practice

Licensed Practical Nurses uphold, promote and adhere to the values and beliefs as described in the Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators (CCPNR) Code of Ethics.

### Indicators:

LPNs:

- 4.1. Practice in a manner consistent with ethical values and obligations of the Code of Ethics for LPNs.
- 4.2. Recognize the impact of their own values and beliefs on nursing practice and nurse-client therapeutic relationships.
- 4.3. Identify ethical issues and communicate them to the health care team.
- 4.4. Develop ethical decision-making capacity and take responsible action toward resolution.
- 4.5. Advocate for the protection and promotion of clients' right to autonomy, respect, privacy, confidentiality, dignity and access to information.
- 4.6. Maintain professional boundaries in the nurse/client therapeutic relationship at all times.
- 4.7. Communicate in a respectful, timely, open and honest manner.
- 4.8. Collaborate with colleagues to promote safe, competent and ethical practice.
- 4.9. Support and contribute to healthy and positive practice environments.
- 4.10. Practice with honesty and integrity to maintain the values and reputation of the profession.

## References

Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume I*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.

Isaacs, M. and Benjamin, M. (1991). *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume II, Programs Which Utilize Culturally Competent Principles*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.



# CODE OF ETHICS FOR LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES IN CANADA

## Preamble

The Code of Ethics articulates the ethical values and responsibilities that Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)<sup>1</sup> uphold and promote, and to which they are accountable. The Code serves to:

- guide LPNs' ethical reflections and decision-making across all areas of licensed practical nurse practice; and,
- inform the public about the ethical values and responsibilities of the LPN profession and convey the profession's commitment to society.

LPNs' primary responsibility is to the client within the context of an inter-professional collaborative environment. "Client" refers to an individual (or their designated representative(s), families, and groups).

Respect for the inherent dignity and rights of clients, colleagues and LPNs underpins the five ethical principles encompassed in the Code. These principles although distinct are inter-related and include:

1. *Responsibility to the Public*
2. *Responsibility to Clients*
3. *Responsibility to the Profession*
4. *Responsibility to Colleagues*
5. *Responsibility to Oneself*

LPNs use the Code of Ethics in conjunction with professional standards and competencies, workplace policies, and legal requirements that guide their practice and behaviour. In achieving these requirements, they fulfill their contract with society for ethical practice.

The *Principles* and *Ethical Responsibilities* are described on the following pages. The *Principles* are statements of the five ethical principles to which LPNs are held accountable. The *Ethical Responsibilities* that accompany each Principle are inter-related and are statements of expected professional conduct in LPN practice situations. The *Principles* and *Ethical Responsibilities* are not in any order of priority – collectively they reflect the LPNs' overall commitment to society. Appendix A provides Guidelines for Ethical Decision-making.

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1 For the purpose of this document, the term "licensed practical nurse" also refers to "registered practical nurse."

## PRINCIPLE 1: Responsibility to the Public

Licensed Practical Nurses, as self-regulating professionals, commit to provide safe, effective, compassionate and ethical care to members of the public.

### Ethical Responsibilities:

LPNs:

- 1.1. Maintain standards of practice, professional competence and conduct.
- 1.2. Provide only those functions for which they are qualified by education or experience.
- 1.3. Demonstrate an understanding that community, society and the environment are important factors in the health of individual clients.
- 1.4. Respect the rights of all individuals regardless of their diverse values, beliefs and cultures.
- 1.5. Provide care directed toward the health and well-being of the person, family, and community.
- 1.6. Collaborate<sup>2</sup> with clients, their families (to the extent appropriate to the client's right to confidentiality), and health care colleagues to promote the health and well-being of individuals, families and the public.

## PRINCIPLE 2: Responsibility to Clients

Licensed Practical Nurses provide safe and competent care for their clients.

### Ethical Responsibilities:

LPNs:

- 2.1. Respect the right and responsibility of clients to be informed and make decisions about their health care.
  - 2.1.1. Respect and support client choices.
  - 2.1.2. Assist and support client participation in making decisions about their health and well-being when factors reduce their capacity for making decisions, in accordance with applicable legislation and regulation.
  - 2.1.3. Respect and adhere to the jurisdictional legislation on capacity assessment and substitute decision-making when the client is incapable of consent.
  - 2.1.4. Consider with other health care professionals and substitute decision-makers the best interests of the client and any previously known wishes or advanced directives that apply in situations where the client is incapable of consent.
- 2.2. Advocate for the client to receive fair and equitable access to needed and reasonably available health services and resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Collaborate is defined as "to work in partnership with members of the interdisciplinary health care team while maintaining autonomy, within one's own scope of practice".

- 2.3. Respect and protect client privacy and hold in confidence information disclosed except in certain narrowly defined exceptions.
  - 2.3.1. Safeguard health and personal information by collecting, storing, using and disclosing it in compliance with relevant legislation and employer policies.
  - 2.3.2. Report any situation where private or confidential information is accessed or disclosed without appropriate consent or legal authority, whether deliberately or through error.
  - 2.3.3. Ensure that any discussion/communication (verbal, written or electronic) is respectful and does not identify the client unless appropriate.
  - 2.3.4. Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media.
- 2.4. Act promptly and appropriately in response to harmful conditions and situations, including disclosing safety issues to appropriate authorities.
- 2.5. Report to appropriate authorities and take other action in a timely manner to ensure a client's safety and quality of care when unethical or incompetent care is suspected.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.6. Provide care to each client recognizing their individuality and their right to choice.
- 2.7. Develop trusting, therapeutic relationships, while maintaining professional boundaries.
- 2.8. Use evidence and judgement to guide nursing decisions.
- 2.9. Identify and minimize risks to clients.
- 2.10. Apply new knowledge, technology and scientific advances to promote safety, client satisfaction and well-being.

## PRINCIPLE 3: Responsibility to the Profession

Licensed Practical Nurses have a commitment to their profession and foster the respect and trust of their clients, health care colleagues and the public.

### Ethical Responsibilities:

LPNs:

- 3.1. Maintain the standards of the profession and conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the integrity of the profession.
- 3.2. Participate in activities allowing the profession to evolve to meet emerging healthcare needs.
- 3.3. Practise in a manner that is consistent with the privilege and responsibility of self-regulation.
- 3.4. Promote workplace practices and policies that facilitate professional practice in accordance with the principles, standards, laws and regulations under which they are accountable.

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<sup>3</sup> Applicable legislation and employer policies should also be consulted to determine in what circumstances reporting is required.

## PRINCIPLE 4: Responsibility to Colleagues

Licensed Practical Nurses develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with nursing colleagues and other health professionals.

### Ethical Responsibilities:

LPNs:

- 4.1. Take appropriate action to address the unprofessional conduct of other members of the inter-professional team.
- 4.2. Collaborate with colleagues in a cooperative, constructive and respectful manner with the primary goal of providing safe, competent, ethical, and appropriate care to individuals, families and communities.
- 4.3. Engage in opportunities to inform colleagues and other health professionals about the LPN role and capabilities.
- 4.4. Acknowledge colleagues' roles and their unique contribution to the inter-professional team.
- 4.5. Respect the expertise of colleagues and share own expertise and knowledge.

## PRINCIPLE 5: Responsibility to Self

Licensed Practical Nurses recognize and function within their personal and professional competence and value systems.

### Ethical Responsibilities:

LPNs:

- 5.1. Demonstrate honesty, integrity and trustworthiness in all interactions.
- 5.2. Recognize their capabilities and limitations and perform only the nursing functions that fall within their scope of practice and for which they possess the required knowledge, skills and judgement.
- 5.3. Accept responsibility for knowing and acting consistently with the principles, practice standards, laws and regulations under which they are accountable.
- 5.4. Disclose to the supervisor/employer any potential or existing personal or legal conflict that makes it difficult to participate in an intervention.
- 5.5. Inform the appropriate authority in the event of becoming unable to practise safely, competently and/or ethically.
- 5.6. Engage in opportunities for career-long learning to continuously develop the competencies required to meet the ethical and regulatory requirements of the profession.
- 5.7. Prevent or manage conflict of interest situations.
- 5.8. Maintain the required mental and physical wellness to meet the responsibilities of their role.

## APPENDIX A: Guidelines for Ethical Decision Making

The following Guidelines are designed to assist LPNs to work towards resolution when faced with an ethical challenge.

Steps in Decision Making	Decision Making Process
<b>Step 1:</b> Describe the issue and identify the nature of the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of issue is it?</li> <li>• What ethical principles are involved?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2:</b> Gather the factual information relevant to the issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate and clarify what happened.</li> <li>• What is the sequence of events?</li> <li>• What are the applicable policies, legislation or regulations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does a workplace policy address the issue?</li> <li>- What does the Code say?</li> <li>- What does legislation or regulation say?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who are the relevant stakeholders? How do they view the situation?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3:</b> Clarify the challenge or problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the issue?</li> <li>• What ethical principles are at stake?</li> <li>• What stakeholders need to be consulted or involved in resolving the issue?</li> <li>• Is unethical conduct by a peer or other professional colleague suspected?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4:</b> Identify options for action, recognizing that the best option may not be obvious at the outset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the options that could resolve the issue?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5:</b> Assess the options in light of applicable policy, legislation, or regulation in terms of advantages and limitations of each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the pros and cons of each option in terms of rectifying and/or satisfying the ethical principle?</li> <li>• Do all options fall within applicable laws or policies?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 6:</b> Decide on a course of action taking all the gathered information into account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the best option for the clients involved that upholds ethical principles?</li> <li>• How will you justify or defend your decision in light of ethical principles, applicable policy, legislation or regulation?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 7:</b> Implement your decision as thoughtfully and sensitively as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you ensure that in the process of acting upon your decision you uphold ethical principles?</li> <li>• How will you explain and/or justify the reasons for your decision?</li> </ul>
<b>Step 8:</b> Assess the consequences of your decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the process you used to arrive at the decision and the decision itself.</li> <li>• Did things turn out as you thought they would?</li> <li>• Would you do the same thing again?</li> <li>• What went right? What went wrong?</li> <li>• Would others benefit from sharing the experience?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B: Definitions

In accordance with the *Licensed Practical Nurses Act (2005)* section 11(1) (f) the following definitions apply to the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador for the purposes of sections 13 – 27 of the Act.

### “Professional Misconduct” includes

- (a) abuse of a client (sexually, physically, verbally, psychologically, financially or otherwise), or
- (b) practising in a manner that constitutes a risk to the health or welfare of clients, or
- (c) delegating components of care to another caregiver without due concern regarding the competence of that other caregiver to provide that care, or
- (d) practising in contravention of the Standards of Practice or a Position Statement made and/or adopted by the College, or
- (e) has been found guilty of an offence, by a court of law that is relevant to the member’s suitability to practice.

[Note: (a), (b), (c) and (d) adapted from CLPNBC “duty to report”]

### “Professional Incompetence” includes

The exhibition of a gross deficit, or of repeated deficits, in the ability of the practitioner to integrate and apply, in a manner consistent with the standards and scope of practice of the profession, the knowledge, skill, attitudes and judgment required to practice safely.

[Note: adapted from CLPNBC definition of “competence”]

### “Conduct Unbecoming” includes

Conduct exhibited, inside or outside the actual practice of the profession that would be reasonably regarded by members of the profession as dishonourable, disgraceful or unprofessional.

### “Incapacity or Unfitness to Practice” includes

Exhibiting physical or mental deficits, or conduct or behaviour, inside or outside the actual practice of the profession, which stems from a physical or mental condition, emotional disturbance, or impairment due to substance use or substance abuse, and that impairs the practitioner’s ability to practice to the degree that it constitutes a risk to the health or welfare of clients.

[Note: adapted from CLPNBC “duty to report”]





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