



The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) 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 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 of this Guideline

As a newly graduated nurse, you have unique needs that are different from those of experienced nurses. The support of your manager and other colleagues will help you to be successful in any designated role, including the charge nurse role. Supportive practice environments will ease your transition into practice and help support safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing care.

This tool is a resource for newly graduated nurses in all practice settings to help them understand strategies to work through when asked to take on the role of Charge Nurse and restrictions related to the Charge Nurse role when holding a conditional licence.

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

Strategies

Taking on the Charge Nurse role requires preparation, including education, mentorship, orientation and support. If you are asked to take on this role and do not feel prepared, here are some strategies to utilize:

COMMUNICATE AND STAY CONNECTED

- Speak with your manager about your concerns. Let them know how you feel and offer a solution. For example, notify the manager that you do not feel ready to take on the Charge Nurse role but with some education, mentorship, orientation and support, you will be ready to take on the role in the future.
- Talk to colleagues who you have graduated with, who have also been asked to take on the role of Charge Nurse. How have they handled this? What education, orientation or mentorship did they engage in as preparation for the role?

KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND STAY WITHIN THEM

- Know the limits of your practice capability during this period of transition. If you are unsure of the competencies required in the Charge Nurse role and how you would obtain these, discuss this with your manager. You should have a clear description of the Charge Nurse role, which should tell you the competencies required.

ADOPT A RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Gradually advance your skills both clinically and as a Charge Nurse. It may be beneficial to discuss with your manager the potential to limit the complexity level of your assignments for the first few months. This will give you time to become comfortable in your role prior to taking on the role of Charge Nurse.
- Identify learning needs and activities and develop a plan to take on the Charge Nurse role.
- Reflect on activities as they happen, formulate and document strategies to address learning needs. Reflecting on your experience while preparing to take on the Charge Nurse role will be essential.
- Use the [Continuing Competence Program](#) to guide your self-reflection. Review and reflect on the standards of practice and develop a learning plan to guide your ongoing progression in practice.

ACCEPT ACCOUNTABILITY

- As an independent practitioner, be responsible and proactive for yourself, your clients and as a member of the health care team.
- Gain a sense of the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities expected of both a new graduate and of a Charge Nurse.

- Look to trusted mentors for support and review any relevant literature. This will assist you in understanding and accepting accountability of the Charge Nurse role.

ASK QUESTIONS

- You may wish to debrief with a trusted, experienced colleague, nurse educator or mentor about clinical situations you have encountered, including potential scenarios as a Charge Nurse, to gain understanding of leadership and decision-making in the Charge Nurse role.

If these strategies are unsuccessful, it may be helpful for you to review the Resolving Professional Practice Issues Practice Guideline. This guideline consists of a five-step process that will assist you in resolving a professional practice issue like this one.

Conditional Licence Restrictions

There are restrictions related to the Charge Nurse role when holding a conditional licence. New graduate practical and registered nurses with conditional licences cannot assume the responsibilities of a care area (facility or unit) which would include making client assignments based on client acuity (i.e. Charge Nurse role).

There are other restrictions for conditional licence holders in addition to those related to the charge nurse role. For more information, visit our website [here](#).

Key Points to Remember

- Taking on the Charge Nurse role requires preparation, including education, mentorship, orientation and support.
- If you are asked to take on this role and do not feel prepared there are strategies you can follow
- There are restrictions related to the Charge Nurse role when holding a conditional licence.

Suggested Reading

- [Resolving Professional Practice Issues Practice Guideline](#)
- [Continuing Competence Program](#)
- [Standards of Practice](#)

For further information on anything contained within this tool, please contact an NSCN Practice Consultant at practice@nscn.ca.