

*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 our registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, RNs and NPs unless otherwise stated.*

Contents

Public Safety ..... 2

Proper use of Protected Titles ..... 2

Proper use of Protected Titles for Conditional Registrants ..... 2

Improper use of Protected Titles ..... 2

The Term “Nurse” ..... 2

Application to Practice ..... 3

Specialties and Certifications ..... 3

Key Points ..... 3

Suggested Readings ..... 3

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

This tool examines the NSCN viewpoint on the use of protected nursing titles. This tool is intended to increase nurses' understanding of their [accountabilities](#) related to:

- Proper use of protected titles
- Improper use of protected titles
- Use of the term “nurse”
- Application to practice

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, RNs and NPs.

A protected title is part of the understanding between the government and the nursing profession. Through the [Nursing Act](#), the government grants the nursing profession exclusive rights to the nursing title and its designations.

## Public Safety

Protected titles assist NSCN to achieve its mandate of public protection by only permitting qualified practitioners to use them. The public can be assured nurses using a protected title have met and continue to meet annual licensure requirements, indicating they can provide safe, [competent](#), ethical and [compassionate nursing services](#). Individuals who unlawfully use nursing titles or designations are placing the public at risk, which could negatively impact public trust in the nursing profession.

## Proper use of Protected Titles

Only current registrants of NSCN can use the following title(s) and designations or any derivation or abbreviation thereof:

- Licensed Practical Nurse or designation LPN or L.P.N.
- Registered Nurse or designation RN or R.N.
- Registered Nurse Authorized to Prescribe or designation RN-AP or R.N.-A.P
- Nurse Practitioner or designation NP or N.P.
- Nurse

## Proper use of Protected Titles for Conditional Registrants

Having completed all elements of the registration and licensure process, graduates from approved schools of nursing programs can apply for conditional licensure. Once approved the conditional licence holder may use the following designations:

Licensed Practical Nurse	Registered Nurse	Nurse Practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Licensed Practical Nurse pending</li><li>• LPN pending</li><li>• L.P.N. pending</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Registered Nurse pending</li><li>• RN pending</li><li>• R.N. pending</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nurse Practitioner pending</li><li>• NP pending</li><li>• N.P. pending</li></ul>

## Improper use of Protected Titles

Individuals using the title of Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, Registered Nurse Authorized to Prescribe or Nurse Practitioner or any derivation of these titles or designations without maintaining current registration with NSCN may be subject to legal action.

## The Term “Nurse”

In the context of health care, the term “nurse” is a protected title under the Nursing Act. It may not be used by any person unless that person is a licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or a student in an approved education program and is authorized by administrators of the program to engage in nursing practice as part of the program.

## Application to Practice

Your professional signature includes your first initial, followed by your last name and designation.

For example:

- K. Jones, LPN
- J. Smith, RN
- R. Jones, RN-AP
- D. Smith, NP

Other education and credentials may be added before the designation.

For example:

- J. Benoit, MAd Ed, BScN, RN
- K. MacDonald, BA, LPN
- D. Smith, MN, RN, NP

Former or retired registrants may not use nursing designations if they do not hold active licensure.

## Specialties and Certifications

Many nursing specialties have certification programs with established organizations such as the Canadian Nurses Association. NSCN does not maintain a specialized practice register or grant specialized designations.

Your professional introduction includes your name and designation.

In order to present an accurate image to the public, NSCN does not authorize the use of terms such as expert or specialist, or credentials that have not been obtained through licensure or granted through a certification program. You must sign your nursing designation first, followed by your specialized credential, for example: "John Doe, RN CON(c).

## Key Points

- The term "nurse" is a protected title under the *Nursing Act*.
- Only current registrants of NSCN can use the nursing title(s) and designations. The public can be assured that nurses using a protected title have met and continue to meet annual licensure requirements.
- Once completed all elements of the registration and licensure process, graduates from approved schools of nursing programs can apply for conditional licensure.
- Individuals that use nursing titles or designations without maintaining current registration with NSCN may be subject to legal action.
- Your professional signature includes your first initial, followed by your last name and designation.
- NSCN does not authorize the use of terms such as expert or specialist, or credentials that have not been obtained through licensure or granted through a certification program.

## Suggested Readings

- [Professional Presence: A Guideline for Nurses](#)
- [Professional Presence Online Education Module](#)

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