

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 NPs to help them understand:

- Legislative authority in relation to admission and discharge of clients from hospital settings.
- Professional accountability in relation to client admission and discharge, including professional, individual and employment scope of practice.
- Considerations in relation to client admission and discharge from hospital settings.

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

Comprehensive health care often requires a client to move within and across the healthcare continuum, between community settings and hospital-based environments. All processes involving admission and discharge from hospital settings are transitional in nature and must involve the client and the members of the collaborative team involved in the client's care.

Legislative Authority

NURSING ACT

The [Nursing Act](#) is the foundation upon which entry-level competencies (ELCs) and standards of practice for NPs are developed. The legislated scope of practice for NPs is outlined in the Nursing Act and it defines the professional scope of practice, which encompasses the roles, functions and accountabilities that NPs are educated and authorized to perform. The professional scope of practice can only be changed by a change in the legislation. Admitting to and discharging clients from hospitals is within the professional scope of practice of NPs.

Prior to April 2022, provisions in the [Hospitals Act](#) prohibited NPs from admitting clients to hospitals.

HOSPITALS ACT

The [Hospitals Act](#) provides the authority for a variety of practitioners to admit to, and discharge clients from hospitals. In 2015 amendments to the Hospitals Act, authorized NPs to discharge clients from hospitals. On April 22, 2022, additional amendments authorized NPs to admit clients to hospitals.

Specifically, Section 2 and 8 of Chapter 208 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the [Hospitals Act](#), is amended to include:

- Section 2(hb) *“qualified nurse practitioner” means a nurse practitioner as defined in the Nursing Act*”;
- Section 8 *“Subject to such conditions and regulations as the board of the hospital by by-law prescribes, the administrator of a hospital, when there is accommodation in the hospital, on the application of a qualified...nurse practitioner”.*

A hospital is defined under Section 2(f) of the [Hospitals Act](#).

NPs are authorized to admit clients to LTC under the [Homes for Special Care Act](#).

These amendments are enabling rather than mandatory, meaning that on an individual basis, health authorities/hospitals will have to work through these new provisions for their organizations to implement these changes.

Nurse Practitioners Professional Accountability Related to Client Admission and Discharge

NP PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION	NP ACCOUNTABILITY
Professional Scope of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The professional scope of practice represents the broadest category and is informed by the Nursing Act, NP Standards of Practice, Entry-Level Competencies for Nurse Practitioners in Canada and other related provincial and federal legislation. Admitting clients to and discharging clients from hospitals is within the professional scope of practice of the NP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the Hospitals Act authorizing NPs to admit clients to hospitals enables further optimization of the professional scope of practice for NPs in NS. NPs are accountable to provide safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical care within their professional scope of practice.
Individual Scope of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual scope of practice is the range or extent of practice within a nurse's professional scope. The individual scope of practice represents an NPs practice based on their entry-to-practice education, practice experience, practice context and any beyond entry-level competencies acquired through additional education (formal and informal) over the course of a career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPs are accountable to provide safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical care within their educational preparation and individual competence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPs must work with their employer to attain the necessary education and competencies to safely admit or discharge clients from hospital. NPs are required to collaborate, consult, and refer clients to the most appropriate health care professional when the client's needs are beyond their competence, individual and/or professional scope of practice.
Scope of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scope of employment is defined by the employer through the job description, policies, guidelines and context specific education. The scope of employment has a significant impact on the NPs individual scope of practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPs are accountable to practice in accordance with employer specific policies, processes, practices and/or guidelines related to the client admission and discharge process. This includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authority to admit or discharge in a specific facility. Transfer of clients from one unit to another or one facility to another. In-patient and post-discharge care needs and resources for clients without a primary health care provider. NPs are expected to demonstrate leadership in the development of policies to optimize their individual scope of practice within their employment setting.

Nurse Practitioner Considerations Related to Client Admission and Discharge

NPs are accountable to practice in accordance with their standards of practice, code of ethics and employer policies to ensure they are providing safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical nursing services at all times. Additionally, they must obtain and possess the necessary knowledge, skill, and judgement to competently admit and discharge clients from hospitals.

NPs should consider the following (not an exhaustive list) as they prepare to engage in the practice of client admission and discharge from hospital.

Government, hospitals, employers and NPs have a role to ensure successful implementation of NPs as an admitting and discharge care provider.

ADMISSION

- The client's diagnosis (supported by the client's assessment) indicates in-hospital care is appropriate.
- The client is informed about the diagnosis, treatment plan and need for hospital admission.
- Consult and collaborate with the interdisciplinary team or another provider as needed.
- Collaborate with other care facilities to obtain information on the client's health as needed.
- Follow employer policies, processes and guidelines related to client admission and care.

DISCHARGE

- The client's assessment supports discharge from hospital.
- Post-discharge care can be managed in a setting outside of the hospital.
- A discharge plan is in place and includes consideration of:
 - The need for supports, services, equipment or personnel
 - Referral to other care facilities or agencies
 - Follow up care needs post-discharge
 - The education and information needs of the client, family or other caregivers.

LIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

All NPs licensed with NSCN have professional liability protection from the [Canadian Nurses Protection Society \(CNPS\)](#).

If you have questions regarding your liability coverage related to your responsibilities for client admission and discharge, please contact CNPS.

Key Points

- NPs have the authority to admit and discharge clients to hospitals under the Hospitals Act.
- NPs ability to both admit and discharge clients will improve access to health services for Nova Scotians.
- NPs must attain the necessary competencies related to hospital admission and discharge and work within employer policies and processes.
- NPs with questions related to liability coverage regarding responsibilities for hospital admission and discharge should contact CNPS.

Suggested Reading

- [Nursing Scope of Practice Guideline](#)
- [NP Practice Guideline](#)

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