

Resolving Professional Practice Issues A Resource for LPNs

Interpretive Document

February 2021



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



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ABOUT CLPNNL

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (CLPNNL) has the legislated responsibility, in accordance with the [Licensed Practical Nurses Act](#) (2005), to regulate the practice of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in Newfoundland and Labrador. The mission of CLPNNL is to regulate LPNs in the public interest.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

CLPNNL develops interpretive documents to provide direction, promote clarity, and give further explanation for LPNs in relation to the expectations identified within the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. This interpretive document provides direction for LPNs related to identifying, communicating, and resolving professional practice issues that may be encountered in the practice area.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE ISSUE?

A professional practice issue (PPI) is any situation, action, or behavior which actually or potentially, directly, or indirectly inhibits, disrupts, or prevents the delivery of safe, competent, compassionate or ethical nursing service, or which perpetuates the delivery of nursing service not consistent with best practice guidelines, the Standards of Practice, the Code of Ethics or employer policy.

PPIs and employment issues, while different, may overlap. PPIs always have an impact on the Standards of Practice and the safety of clients or others. Employment issues are specifically related to the employment relationship.

Some situations may contain both a PPI and an employment issue. See the below table for examples.

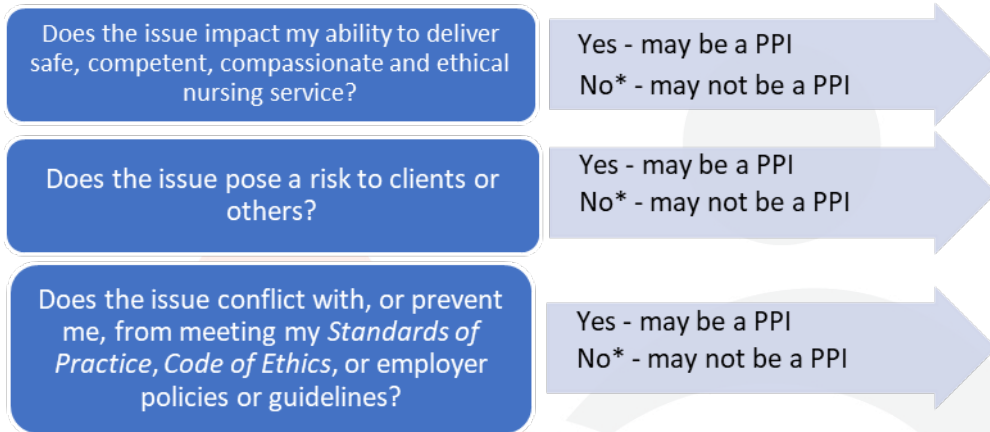
Table 1:

Professional Practice Issue	Employment Issue
Expected care outside of competence level	Floating to dialysis with no dialysis training or experience
Duty of care	Absenteeism
Inability to carry out all required care due to workload	Staffing levels
Delayed documentation	Non-functioning computer for documentation
Fitness to practice during excessive hours of work	Pay rates for excessive hours of work
Disruptive inter/intra professional communication	Incivility



IS THIS A PPI?

The following guiding questions will help you determine if you may have a PPI:



* If you answered No, the issue may not be a PPI, however you should continue to explore the issue with your manager.

NOTE: If there is imminent or immediate risk to client safety, steps to ensure client safety must be taken, and notification made to the most appropriate individual, within the chain of command¹ in your organization (e.g., manager, on-call manager, charge nurse, coordinator), who has the authority, where needed, to address the issue.

WHAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO ADDRESS AND RESOLVE A PPI?

The *Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics for Licensed Practical Nurses in Canada* outlines the obligations of the LPN. Such obligations include identifying and reporting circumstances that potentially impede professional, ethical, or legal practice, as well as taking action to avoid or minimize harm to clients or others. Advocacy for continuous improvements in practice and health care environments is also an expectation of the LPN. Taking the right action is important. LPNs adhere to requirements for professionalism and privacy and confidentiality in all interactions.

For issues related to conduct deserving of sanction of an LPN or other required reporting, see CLPNNL’s document [Duty to Report](#).

The following 5-step process is presented to assist LPNs when working to resolve a PPI.



¹A Chain of command defines the hierarchical lines of authority in an organization and provides a mechanism for individuals to resolve issues and concerns (HIROC, 2010).

1. Define the issue

It is important to reflect on your issue and gather information so that you can articulate the issue.

- What is the issue?
- What is the urgency of the issue?
- How does the issue pose a risk to client safety or adherence to standards of practice?

2. Identify Resources

Identify the resources that may be helpful to you as you work to resolve the PPI.

- Do you have the knowledge and skills to resolve the issue?
- Will you require the assistance of others (e.g., colleagues, manager)?
- What resources exist (internal and/or external²) that could be helpful to you as you work to resolve the issue?

3. Develop and implement an action plan

Once identified, action to address a PPI must be taken.

DEVELOP - A planned approach is helpful, especially if the PPI involves many people or is challenging to resolve. The plan you develop will vary depending on the urgency, nature, and complexity of the PPI as well as the available resources.

- Brainstorm possible solutions to resolve the PPI.
- Determine the potential positive and negative outcomes for each solution.
- Decide which solution could be the best approach.
- Develop a plan outlining the action you will take and when you will implement your chosen solution(s).

IMPLEMENT – There may be situations where a PPI can be resolved between colleagues (e.g., an isolated occurrence of unprofessional communication). However, resolving other PPIs may require a different action. In these situations, it is important to notify your manager so that they are briefed and can provide support if required. LPNs follow the chain of command in their organization when addressing PPIs. The chain of command may differ between organizations and if you are not certain of the chain of command in your organization, consult your manager or organizational chart. A chain of command may be, for example, nurse in charge -> unit manager -> division manager -> director -> Vice President -> CEO. If you are advancing an issue up the chain of command, it is advisable to inform your manager you are advancing the issue to the next level.

²Examples of internal resources include manager, clinical educator, professional practice department, human resources. Examples of external resources include CLPNNL practice consultant, Union, employee assistance program (EAP).



When discussing a PPI with your manager:

- Provide an objective and detailed description of the PPI with the information identified in step 1. Include how the PPI impacts client care, safe nursing practice, and/or team relations.
- Frame your conversations using the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. This will help focus the conversation on the LPN's professional responsibilities.
- Bring forward possible solutions that could assist in resolving the PPI.
- Follow up on the meeting in writing and indicate a reasonable³ timeframe when you hope to hear back from the manager.

4. Document

Keeping a record of steps taken to resolve a PPI, such as a copy of a sent e-mail, helps to ensure there is an accurate account of events, and, to demonstrate that you have met your professional obligations. Communication with managers and other leaders in your organization should be noted in your records, and any meetings or discussions should be followed up in writing as soon as possible. Personal records must not include any identifiable client information. As well, the client record is not the place to document discussions regarding PPIs. Check your organization's policies regarding documentation and to determine if other internal documentation is required (e.g., occurrence reporting).

Include the following in your written communication:

- a description of the PPI (from step 1) including the date of occurrence, using objective and factual details;
- the actions attempted to resolve the PPI;
- the impact of the PPI on your ability to meet the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics or organizational policies;
- a list of meetings and phone calls, including who was in attendance, and outcomes of those meetings or phone calls; and,
- a request for the manager to follow up with you.

A template for a written communication is included in **Appendix A**.

³The determination of a reasonable time will be influenced by what is appropriate and fair for your practice area and by the urgency of the professional practice issue.

5. Evaluate

Evaluation helps to ensure the issue has been addressed and allows for reflection on what happened, what you learned and if you would do anything differently if another PPI occurs. Depending on the issue, it may not be possible to resolve it immediately and this should be considered in the evaluation process.

If the manager decides it is best for them to manage the PPI, it is acceptable to ask the manager to inform you when the PPI has been addressed. Due to confidentiality, the manager may not be able to provide you with detailed information about how they resolved the PPI. They may only be able to inform you that the issue has been addressed.

If after a reasonable time the PPI persists, or reoccurs, step back and consider why. Review your process by reflecting on the following:

- Did you clearly define the issue?
- Were the right people involved in the decision making?
- What could have been done differently?

Further action may include:

- Meeting with your manager again to determine if resolution is likely.
- Considering, if not already done, discussing the PPI with the next level of management (as per your organizations chain of command).
- Continuing to notify the appropriate people until the issue has been resolved.



APPENDIX A

Sample

The following sample letter may be used as a template to develop your communications to your manager, regarding a PPI.

Date:

Name & title of manager
Employer address

Dear X,

I am writing this letter in follow up to our discussion on *--- date ---* regarding the professional practice concern we discussed, the impact of the issue on my ability to meet *the ---Standards of Practice/Code of Ethics/organizational policies---* and potential solutions. My concern is *---State your concern---* .

The incident occurred on*---be specific, factual, objective and include exactly what happened---*. The issue has impacted my ability to meet the *---Standards of Practice/Code of Ethics/organizational policies---* in the following ways *--- include relevant standards and indicators or other details as applicable ---*.

During our meeting we discussed the situation and the potential impact on my ability to provide safe client care. Possible resolutions we discussed were: *--- identify what was discussed ---*

In closing I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me and discuss these concerns. As we discussed, I look forward to a response from you by *--- date ---* .

Sincerely,

Name LPN
Practice area.





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