



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT

Complaint Process

Info Sheet

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What is the College of Nurses of Northwest Territories and Nunavut?

In Northwest Territories and Nunavut, the law requires all nurses to be regulated. Formal bodies called “colleges” are the regulators. Their role is to ensure people in Northwest Territories and Nunavut receive safe and high-quality care. The College of Nurses of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (CNNN) is the regulator for all nurses in Northwest Territories and Nunavut. CNNN sets standards that nurses must meet to practice in the Territories. One of the ways CNNN enforces its standards is by responding to complaints.

Who can complain to the College?

Complaints can come from patients and other members of the public. There are also provisions in the Acts that require Employers and Registrants to report unprofessional conduct to CNNN. By law, CNNN must address every complaint it receives about nursing care.

What kinds of complaints can the College address?

CNNN must address complaints about any aspect of nursing care. Examples include complaints about giving medication unsafely, taking money, being rough with a patient and any form of sexual abuse.

CNNN **does not** address a complaint when:

- the complaint is about problems where the nurse works, not about the nurse (such as bad business practices at a care facility)
- the complaint is made in bad faith (for example, in retaliation as part of a personal dispute).
- the complaint is unsigned or made anonymously.

What happens when someone wants to make a complaint?

First, CNNN must receive the completed and signed complaint form. If you are unable to complete the form, contact us and we can assist you. The complaint should include the name and

complete contact information of the person making the complaint, called the **complainant**. Also include all complaint details, such as where and when the issue took place, and the name of the nurse involved. CNNN will then contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and explain the complaints process. CNNN may ask for some follow-up information at this point. In some cases, a complaint can be resolved quickly if the complainant simply brings the problem to the attention of the facility where the nurse works. CNNN encourages the complainant to try this first, if possible. CNNN also writes to the nurse named in the complaint, informing them of the complaint and explaining the complaints process. CNNN does not represent the nurse involved in the complaint or offer legal advice. Our role is to protect the public. Nurses facing complaints may seek legal counsel, which is available through their professional association.

Complaint Resolution

Northwest Territories and Nunavut law allows CNNN to resolve certain types of complaints using an alternative dispute resolution agreement, or undertaking agreement. This process is faster, and more satisfactory results are reported for both the complainant and the nurse involved. This is because they each play a big role in how the complaint is addressed. Resolution by way of agreement can be ordered by the Complaints officer and/or the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC). These processes are only possible if everyone involved agrees to it. A facilitator from CNNN, commonly the Complaints Officer, communicates separately with the complainant and the nurse with the goal to resolve the complaint without a formal investigation. This is an opportunity for nurses to show they are willing to keep learning and striving to maintain and exceed CNNN’s standards of practice. At CNNN, this is called reflective practice. As part of the process, the facilitator drafts a resolution agreed upon by all parties: the complainant, the nurse, and CNNN. For the nurse, signing means they must fulfill the terms of their agreement.

Everything in the agreement process stays confidential. An agreement is not published on CANN's website or made available to any current or future employer unless stated in the agreement. The complainant and nurse do not meet face-to-face.

Investigating a complaint

When a complaint cannot be resolved through an agreement process, it goes through the investigation process and is then brought forward to a panel of the PCC for review. The PCC may require a formal investigation report to review prior to making a decision on the matter. The role of CANN's investigator is to gather information about the issues raised in the complaint. First, they obtain information from the complainant. They may also interview witnesses and compile documents related to the complaint, such as health records. Once all the information is gathered, the investigator interviews the nurse involved in the complaint. The nurse receives a copy of documents gathered in the investigation and is given another opportunity to respond to the allegations. They may also receive copies of any decisions involving their nursing practice that a College has made in the past, since this history could be taken into consideration when the complaint is reviewed.

The nurse has 30 days to provide a written response. Once received, the investigator does any further investigation needed and provides the results to the nurse involved. The nurse then has another opportunity to respond.

Next, the matter is scheduled for review by a panel of the PCC. Neither the complainant nor the nurse or nurses involved attend the review meeting.

Reviewing the complaint

Information the investigator has gathered is reviewed by the PCC. The PCC, composed of experienced nurses and members of the public, is chaired by the Chairperson appointed by the Board of Directors.

If the information gathered during the investigation does not support the complaint, the

PCC may dismiss the complaint. If the information gathered during the investigation supports the complaint, the PCC will consider the seriousness of the issues raised. It also takes into account any previous decisions the College has made involving the nursing practice of the nurse named in the complaint.

Based on these considerations, the PCC decides if remedial action is required to protect the public.

Here are some courses of action the PCC can take, depending on the seriousness of the review's outcome.

- If the PCC finds no support the nurse breached any of the standards of nursing practice, it may dismiss the complaint in part or whole.
- accept a voluntary surrender of a practice permit.
- The PCC can censure the nurse
- The PCC can require the nurse to complete a Remediation Program, a guided program of online learning and practice reflection. The College monitors the nurse's participation in the program by way of an undertaking agreement or alternate dispute resolution agreement.
- The PCC can refer some or all the issues in the complaint to a Board of Inquiry to conduct a hearing.

The nurse and complainant receive a copy of the PCC's decision.

Do you have more questions about addressing complaints at CANN? Please contact:

Phone: 867-688-8267

Email: intake@cann.ca