



Suite 302, Starlight Gallery  
7071 Bayers Road  
Halifax, NS  
B3L 2C2

---

## PRACTICE MEMO

**TO: Members and Stakeholders**

**FROM: Douglas A Bungay RN MN  
Director of Professional Practice and Policy**

**RE: Mandatory Practice Upgrades: Medication Administration  
and Physical Assessment**

---

Mandatory Medication Administration and Physical/Health Assessment practice upgrades are needed, for those who require them, by the end of the 2013 licensure year (October 31 2013).

As always, the College's object is to ensure LPNs have the necessary competencies to provide safe, competent and ethical care. Changes in the National Practical Nurse Competencies have created the need for mandatory upgrading for some LPNs. The changes have been based in the education programs for practical nurses and as such have resulted in groups of nurses with different upgrade requirements based on the year in which they graduated. This information has been developed in an effort to provide some guidelines around the mandatory upgrades.

### Medication Administration

#### Background

In terms of medication administration upgrade, nurses fall into one of two groups:

1. **Group A** nurses completed the practical nurse (formerly certified nursing assistant) program in Nova Scotia in the years up to 1979; and then 1990 and beyond. This group **had** a medication administration course in their basic program.
2. **Group B** nurses completed the practical nurse (formerly certified nursing assistant) program between 1980 and 1989 and **did not** have a medication administration course in their basic program.

**Group A** nurses **meet** the mandatory upgrade requirement set for October 31 2013 *regardless* if they are currently administering medications or not. **Group A** nurses, not current in medication administration, are expected to complete an approved Medication Administration Course *before* engaging in medication administration. **Group A** nurses, whereby medication administration is not an expectation of employment are not required to complete a medication administration course until such time when it becomes an expectation of employment.

**Group B** nurses **do not meet** the requirements for the mandatory upgrade set for October 31 2013 and must complete an approved Medication Administration Course in the prescribed time. It is important to note that this upgrade is mandatory *even if medication administration is not an expectation by the nurse's current employer*. **Group B** nurses, who do not complete a medication administration course by Oct 31 2013, will be issued a three (3) month temporary license with the condition to complete the medication course in this time. Failing to do so will result in their registration being moved to an inactive status (LPN Regulations 2009).

## **Physical/Health Assessment**

### **Background**

Practical nurses who graduated in 2001\* and beyond are not impacted by this upgrade because the basic program at the time contained the necessary courses. The mandatory upgrade impacts practical nurses who graduated prior to and including the year 2000.

Determining if a nurse meets the necessary requirements for the mandatory upgrade for Physical/Health Assessment (PA) is more complicated than medication administration. A variety of factors contribute to the complexity of this process. For instance, some nurses completed a PA course before the requirement was mandatory which means the course may or may not have met the expected standard. Some courses were offered at work sites and delivered to specific outcomes based on the current population such as elderly and/or only focused on a few body systems. Some were deemed 'refresher' and their content was not sufficiently comprehensive.

The College has ongoing requests to "recognize" employer based assessment courses as meeting the mandatory upgrade requirements. The College is able to do this on a one-by-one basis, *after* all the necessary documentation about the course has been received (course outline and learning outcomes). Each individual nurse is accountable for maintaining the necessary documents in their

---

\*Refers to graduates who successfully completed CPNRE **September** 2001 & beyond. Those who completed CPNRE before September 2001 require the upgrade.

personal learning profile. The College does not retain nor have access to any program that had been offered by an educational institution or private educator. Nurses who require a certificate of attendance or completion are encouraged to contact the educational institution or private educator directly.

Every individual request that comes to the College is reviewed and a decision is made based on the information at hand. The following information has been created to provide clarity to the process.

## **Types of Courses**

### **1. Community College Based**

- Nurses attended a community college or a representative from a community college came off-site or to the work place to teach a program. Nurses/employers paid tuition to the community college and nurses received a certificate of completion from the community college.
- Courses from the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) System are accepted without review.
- NSCC courses are accepted in every jurisdiction across Canada and as a result NSCC courses qualify for tuition reimbursement through CPLNNS and the Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy fund.
- Most courses from community colleges in other jurisdictions are accepted without review, however, a member may be required to provide documentation in regards to the course outline and objectives. Once a course has been approved by CLPNNS for one member, the course is considered approved for all members who have completed it.

### **2. Private Educator Based**

- Nurses attended an off-site or work place program and a privately employed educator taught the program. Nurses/employers paid a fee to the private educator or the educators company. Nurses received a completion certificate from the private educator or the company/government agency the educator represented.
- Currently CLPNNS recognizes one program offered by a private educator (A. Petten) as long as the course offered has met ***all of*** the following criteria:
  - i. Content focused on the adult or healthy adult
  - ii. Content focused on the following body systems:
    - Integumentary
    - Endocrine
    - CV: Including peripheral circulation
    - Respiratory

- GI
- GU
- CNS
- Reproductive
- Immune: Lymphatic
- Special senses
- Members who have completed courses by the recognized educator that do not meet the above criteria **are required** to complete the missing modules in order to fully satisfy the requirements for the mandatory upgrade.
- CLPNNS recognizes this course for members practicing in Nova Scotia and does not guarantee the acceptance of this program in other jurisdictions across Canada (individual members are recommended to make that determination before they enrol or move jurisdictions) ;therefore this course **does not** qualify for tuition reimbursement through CPLNNS and the Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy fund.

### 3. Employer Based

- Nurses attended a work based program taught by an educator employed by the work site or outside agency. Nurses may or may not have received a certificate of completion.
- Currently CLPNNS acknowledges employer based programs as long as the course offered has met the following criteria:
  - i. Content focused on the adult or healthy adult
  - ii. Content focused on the following body systems:
    - Integumentary
    - Endocrine
    - CV: Including peripheral circulation
    - Respiratory
    - GI
    - GU
    - CNS
    - Reproductive
    - Immune: Lymphatic
    - Special senses
  - iii. The nurses' manager notifies CLPNNS in writing that the nurse is consistently applying the PA knowledge in her/his daily practice and actively maintaining competence.
  - iv. Nurses provide a certificate or documentation of completion
- Employer based programs **DO NOT** transfer from employer to employer and **only meet** mandatory upgrade requirements *as long as the nurse remains with the employer that sponsored the program*. This will impact members working for more than 1

employer. (Course A at Employer A will not be transferable to Employer B *even if* the member is still working at Employer A).

- This course **does not** qualify for tuition reimbursement through CPLNNS and the Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy fund.
- Members should be aware that if they are relying solely on an employer based program to satisfy the requirement of the mandatory upgrade, they **will not** meet requirements for ongoing licensing or licensure renewal should they discontinue (resign, retire or terminate) employment with that employer.
- If a member relying solely on employer based program, leaves the employer for any reason (resign, retire or terminate), their license to practice will be converted from active practicing to temporary for 3 months after the date to separation. If an approved PA program is not completed in the 3 month period the temporary license is converted to inactive. Nurses may not practice with an inactive license.
- Members should also be aware that they are *obligated to disclose* to any new employer that they do not possess the necessary credentials required to hold an unencumbered *active* practicing license and that their current licensing status will be converted to temporary until such time an approved PA course is completed.

Members who do not complete a PA course by Oct 31 2013, will be issued a three (3) month temporary license with the condition to complete PA course in this time. Failing to do so will result in their registration being moved to an inactive status (LPN Regulations 2009).

Members should be aware that practicing nursing without the necessary licensing or appropriate professional credentialing or upgrading is considered grounds for professional misconduct and subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the LPN Act (2006).

## Reference

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia. (2011). *Administrative Policy: Post Grad: Physical/Health Assessment Mandatory Upgrade*. Halifax: Author.