



Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network Annual Report, June 2021

In 2019 the Network adopted a two-year strategic directions initiative. Some of the accomplishments were reported in 2020 and others were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 Annual Report is a summary of the Network activities and accomplishments that were rescheduled due to COVID-19 and completed in this year.

The purpose of the Network, prescribed in *The Regulated Health Professions Network Act* (<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/regulated%20health%20professions%20network.pdf>), is “to foster and enable collaboration among regulated health professions in a manner that upholds and protects the public interest, through enhanced regulation by the health professions”. The *Act* describes the duties of the Network to:

- (a) be a forum to share resources, information, trends and issues among the regulated health professions and others;
- (b) promote best practices in health-profession regulation while preserving the regulatory autonomy of each regulated health profession;
- (c) enable Network members to build capacity for their regulatory functions by facilitating collaboration with other Network members and other bodies;
- (d) provide a single point of contact for discussion and consultation with government and others on matters that may impact the regulation of health professions;
- (e) facilitate the development of strategies and approaches that will enable Network members to respond individually and collectively to regulatory challenges and opportunities;
- (f) provide information to other bodies that will facilitate improvements in health-care delivery or regulation;
- (g) encourage voluntary collaboration among Network members for any purpose that serves the public interest;
- (h) develop voluntary collaborative regulatory processes to allow Network members to address
 - (i) matters relating to scopes of practice that arise among regulated health professions,
 - (ii) collaborative investigative processes,
 - (iii) collaborative registration review processes, and
 - (iv) such other collaborative regulatory processes as are set out in the regulations.

Strategic Directions for 2019-2021

Our work plan included activities to support our 2019-2021 strategic goals, as well as those that strengthen the Network’s performance in its core duties.

1. To enhance public accountability of health profession regulators.
 - a. Explore what the public wants to know from health regulators
 - b. Determine what and how NS health regulators should share publicly

An annotated literature review was completed in November 2019 with additional references added as they were published. A working group of Council members reviewed the information in the literature review and noted that two themes, regulator accountability regarding a public registry and the better communication about complaints and investigations processes were important. The working group also reviewed websites from a sample of regulators to consider the consistency of content and how it was presented. It developed drafts and received Council feedback.

The Network approved a motion endorsing as good practice the approaches set out in the document “A Resource for Network Members Regarding What the Public Wants to Know Regarding a Public Registry” and recommend adoption by Network members to the extent that is permitted by relevant legislation. A second motion was also approved endorsing as good practice the approaches set out in the document “A Resource for Network Members Regarding What the Public Wants to Know Regarding Complaints and Investigations” and recommend adoption by Network members to the extent that is permitted by relevant legislation. The working group also discussed the potential for using templates for complaints and investigations that can be incorporated by regulators as a future initiative.

c. Identify standards of good regulation for regulators

The Network also approved a motion endorsing as good practice the approaches set out in the document “Standards of Good Regulation 2020: A Resource for Network Members” and recommend adoption by Network members to the extent that is permitted by relevant legislation. The document serves as a resource for Network members on common standards for good regulation. It is intended for Network members to use in part or whole to guide their governance and operations. The “Standards of Good Regulation 2020: A Resource for Network Members” can be useful for health professions hoping to be self-regulated.

It was recommended that the three documents be updated regularly so they are current with best practice and minimally every two years. All documents are available to Network members.

2. To collaborate in a manner that upholds and protects the public interest.
 - a. Explore best regulatory practices in assuring ongoing competence of registrants

A working group on continuing competency undertook a literature review of best practices in assuring ongoing competence of registrants. An annotated bibliography of twenty-seven selected references on continuing professional development (CPD) and continuing competence was developed and from these a short list (9) of the most noteworthy was

compiled. The working group also identified four resources illustrating how CPD can be implemented. The references and examples cited in the document “NSRHPN Working Group on Continuing Competency: Report to Council, June 2021” can be viewed at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wbn15tOoRS6b6A9bc_JUL9hyss5Xz-rx?usp=sharing

In the document, the working group acknowledges that regulators have standards or policies for continuing professional development (CPD) for their registrants to demonstrate continuing competency that are relevant to their scope of practice and meet re-licensure criteria. Although demonstrating a minimum number of practice hours in a specified period and a specific number “approved” education hours are most common, it would seem these requirements alone are insufficient to maintain, develop, and update knowledge, skills, and performance to provide safe and effective patient care. From a review of the references and the cited examples, practitioner reflective practice, ideally with some aspect of facilitation or coaching, would be a desirable component for CPD whereby continued learning is seen as contributing to competence. The Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) has developed guidelines and resources for both practitioners and organizations to implement reflective practice. The HCPC describe reflective practice as “... a process which helps you gain insight into your professional practise by thinking analytically about any element of it”.

Requirements for re-licensure vary among regulators and anything more rigorous than counting hours and/or approved CPD are likely attributable to the ability of a regulator to manage. The Network may want to consider providing consultation for its members on incorporating evidence-based guidelines or standards for CPD. Such a consultation could include a survey of Network members on CPD requirements for re-licensure.

b. Pool resources around governance training

The Network hosted a governance workshop in September 2019. Deanna Williams of Dundee Consulting was the facilitator of “Regulation in the Public Interest” and provided a handout resource for Network Members. There were 51 participants from 14 Network members and 3 participants from 2 non-Network members in the workshop.

A second virtual workshop on Governance for Regulators with Richard Steinecke from SML-Law as a resource person was held in November 2020. There were 43 registrants for the workshop from 11 Network member organizations and 2 participants from 1 non-Network member in the workshop.

The Network members can access summary of governance resources compiled from a selected literature review at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sqVDPNj8pJ3UZ8HTHil-MNO7dcXH-ILv?usp=sharing>. The most recent addition to the list of governance resources

is a handbook on governance for regulators from Steinecke Maciura Leblanc <https://www.sml-law.com/resources/governance-for-regulators/>.

Network members can also access resources through CLEAR (Council on Licensure Enforcement & Regulation; <https://www.clearhq.org>) and CNAR (Canadian Network of Agencies of Regulation; <https://www.cnar-rcor.ca>).

3. Operational (ongoing deliverables arising from the Act): Build engagement among members to foster and enable collaboration.
 - a. Be a forum to share resources, information, trends, and issues in health profession regulation

Most notably in 2020-2021 was the Network's initiatives regarding COVID-19. With the outbreak of the pandemic the Network provided regular communiques to members regarding the latest updates on COVID-19. The updates were intended to assure Network members that they all had the same evidence-based information to guide their respective organizations. In addition, the Executive Committee proposed special COVID-19 meetings for Council members to share their perspectives on pandemic related issues.

- b. Enable Network members to build capacity by facilitating collaboration among members

The Network's activities and accomplishments are realized through the many hours of members volunteering their time and expertise. Although working groups and committees have adopted virtual processes to undertake their work, it has not diminished a spirit of collaboration. A notable example has been the commitment of the Network to pursue and embrace innovation in self-regulation by approving recommendations from a working group on innovation in self-regulation to collaborate with the Department of Health and Wellness regarding a proposal for a Nova Scotia Health Professions and Occupations Act.

- c. Facilitate inter-provincial collaboration on multi-jurisdictional practice/tele-practice among regulators

In 2019, the Network accepted the request of Denise Perret, QC, Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia to establish meetings to facilitate discussion regarding multi-jurisdictional practice. Deputy Minister Perret identified challenges for some IWK Health Centre clinicians related to registration/licensure to practice in multiple provinces including the IWK's perceived administrative burden of completing applications and paying for multiple registrations and annual licensures. Her request to the Network was on behalf of the Atlantic Deputy Ministers of Health. The Network undertook: 1. Scheduling meetings among Nova Scotia health regulators, representatives from the IWK, and the Nova Scotia Department of

Health and Wellness (DHW); 2. Undertaking a review of current practice among Nova Scotia health regulators; 3. Collating a series of reference documents on multi-jurisdictional practice; 4. Exploring multi-jurisdictional practice issues with affiliated organizations, the Council on Licensure, Regulation and Enforcement (CLEAR; <https://www.clearhq.org>), and the Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation (CNAR; <http://www.cnar-rcor.ca/home>). A summary was prepared, and the Network continues to monitor multi-jurisdictional issues for health professions in Canada and internationally to keep its members apprised of emerging issues such as COVID-19 which meant many Network members to adapt licensing requirements and consider policy changes to allow for virtual care.

- d. Collaborate with the Nova Scotia Fair Registration Practices office regarding best practices

Network representatives sit on an advisory committee for FRPA. The FRPA office hosts regular information sharing meetings for regulators that are attended by many Network members.

- e. Implement as required collaborative registration appeal review policies and procedures

A survey of Network members indicated that there were almost no registration appeals among its members in the last five years. The registration appeal review policies and procedures were first developed in 2013 and were due for review and updating as required. A working group undertook the review and updated Council. The Network sought feedback from the FRPA Office on the revisions being proposed. The Network approved seven revised policies regarding registration appeal review. All policies are available for Network members to adopt as needed.

- f. Liaise with stakeholders and the public

The Network liaises with its stakeholders on specific topics such as MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) through committee participation. Nova Scotia Health has established a M.A.i.D. Advisory Committee that will assume the leadership role previously provided by the Network. The Network and some of its members will be represented on the NS Health Committee chaired by Dr. Gordon Gubitza.

The Network serves as a resource to help its members liaise with one another and other organizations on specific questions. For the public, the Network website <https://www.nsrhpn.ca> and social media such as Facebook and Twitter are means of communication.

g. Provide efficient and effective operation of the business of The Network

The Network produces an annual report and the last two years has undertaken a review engagement of its financial operations by the accounting firm MNP. The Network Executive Committee monitors the budget with regular updates from the Executive Director.

COVID-19 remains a dominant issue for the Network and its member organizations since March 2020. The Network has responded by distributing regular, frequent updates on matters pertinent to health regulators. Additional virtual meetings of the Council were held for members to share issues and learnings as they were experienced and responded to COVID-19.

Governance

Our governing Council consists of representatives from our 22 Network members.

Member Representatives (Voting)	
College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists Cindy Wheeler, Registrar	Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists Janice Jones, Executive Director/Registrar
College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia Stacy Bryan, Registrar/CAO	Nova Scotia College of Nursing Sue Smith, CEO & Registrar
College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia Kevin Wong, Registrar	Nova Scotia College of Optometrists Carl Davis, Past Chair
College of Paramedics of Nova Scotia Karl Kowalczyk, Executive Director/Registrar	Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists Bev Zwicker CEO & Registrar
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia D.A. (Gus) Grant, Registrar/CEO	Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists Joan Ross, Registrar
Denturist Licensing Board of Nova Scotia Maureen Hope, Registrar	Nova Scotia College of Respiratory Therapists Tara Planetta, Registrar
Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals Julie Avery, Executive Director/Registrar	Nova Scotia College of Social Workers Alec Stratford, Executive Director/Registrar
Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology Gordon Butler, Registrar	Nova Scotia Dental Technicians Association Christian Hall, President
Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists John Hubert, Registrar & Executive Director	Nova Scotia Dietetic Association Jennifer Hemeon, Executive Manager
Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors Janis Noseworthy, Registrar	Midwifery Regulatory Council of Nova Scotia Jenny Wright, Registrar/Executive Director
Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians Brigitte MacInnes, Registrar	Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia Martin Gillis, Registrar
Member Representatives (Non-Voting)	
Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness Cindy Cruikshank, Director of Health Workforce Polices and Programs	Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network Bruce Holmes, Executive Director

New member representatives bring fresh perspectives on collaborative health care regulation that is invaluable to serving our purpose and fulfilling our duties.

The Network Executive Committee (2019-2021) was:

Bev Zwicker	Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists	Chair
Bruce Holmes	Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network	Ex-officio
Janice Jones	Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists	Member-at-Large
Jennifer Hemeon	Nova Scotia Dietetic Association	Member-at-Large
Julie Avery	Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals	Smaller Member Representative
Martin Gillis	Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia	Larger Member Representative

The 2021 Audit Committee membership was:

Bruce Holmes	Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network	Ex-officio, NSRHPN
Edith Mosher	Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network	Ex-officio, NSRHPN
Colleen Arnold, CPA, CMA	Nova Scotia College of Nursing	External
Karl Kowalczyk	College of Paramedics of Nova Scotia	NSRHPN
Susan Pike, CPA, CGA	Nova Scotia Community College	External
Stacy Bryan	College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia	NSRHPN

The 2021 Nominations Committee membership was:

Kevin Wong	College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia
Bev Zwicker	Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists
Bruce Holmes	Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network (ex-officio)
Janice Jones	Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists
Jennifer Hemeon	Nova Scotia Dietetic Association
Julie Avery	Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals
Martin Gillis	Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia

External Membership and Collaboration

The Network is a member of CLEAR (Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation; <http://www.clearhq.org>) and CNAR (Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation; <http://www.cnnar.ca>). Both organizations provide international and national perspectives on regulation and offer the opportunity to share resources. The Network participates in the committee for Inter-professional Education Community Engagement at Dalhousie University. The Network is renewing its collaboration agreement with the Department of Health and Wellness. With a shared focus of the public’s best health interest, we value their participation at our Council meetings.