

Our Response to the Long-Term Care Homes Public Inquiry Recommendations

The College of Nurses of Ontario's actions to protect patients from harm

In 2016, a nurse registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) confessed to murdering eight Ontario patients. In 2018, Commissioner Eileen Gillese led the Long-Term Care Homes Public Inquiry to understand how this happened and what improvements the Ontario health care system could make.

At the inquiry, we provided information to help improve the system and protect residents and patients from harm. At this time, we also learned more about what you expect from CNO — and we didn't wait for Commissioner Gillese's final report before taking action to improve. In 2018 and 2019, we strengthened and enhanced our processes, and will continue doing so.

Commissioner Gillese's final report in July 2019 made **10 recommendations** specifically for CNO. Here are the recommendations and the actions we have taken to meet them.

Educate nurses about the possibility that a nursing colleague is causing intentional harm to a patient

We are raising awareness about health care serial killers with the following actions:

- Posting information about health care serial killers on our Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages, which are followed by nurses and employers of nurses
- Publishing the article “A Regulatory Response to Healthcare Serial Killing” in the *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, April 2019
- Educating our staff and committees about nurses who cause intentional harm

Strengthen CNO's process that investigates concerns employers have about a nurse's practice

We reviewed and improved the investigation process. This includes our investigators using a common list of questions when interviewing employers who send us concerns about a nurse's practice. The interview template ensures we receive consistent information which helps investigators assess the level of risk.

Revise CNO policies and procedures to include the possibility a nurse might intentionally harm a patient

- We reviewed and added a [new tool](#) to our investigation process to help determine a nurse's level of risk to public safety. When we receive a concern, the tool helps investigators assess how risky the nurse's behaviour is to patients. It helps an investigator consider factors such as the nurse's behaviour, and whether that behaviour was deliberate, reckless, put patients at risk, or was a result of human or system error.
- Our Entry-to-Practice team assesses Ontario nurse applicants to ensure they meet the requirements. The team is developing new ways to assess applicants on risk factors associated with health care serial killers and other high-risk harms, such as sexual abuse.

Share CNO research on health care serial killers with other health care partners to raise awareness of the issue

- We share our research and what we learned with key stakeholders, including other Ontario health care regulators and national nursing regulators
- Our CEO, Anne Coghlan, is presenting our research on health care serial killers to provincial, national and international health care regulators

Work with approved nursing education programs in Ontario to ensure their learning includes:

- care for an aging population
- possibility of nurses causing intentional harm to patients

- and -

Influence approved nursing education programs in Ontario to ensure their learning includes:

- care for an aging population
- possibility of nurses causing intentional harm to patients
- **Nursing care for an aging population:**
 - We have entry-to-practice requirements nurses must meet to competently provide care to patients of all ages, including older patients
 - Nursing education programs must show how their curriculum meets these competencies for approval
- **Promoting student placements in long-term care homes:**
 - Nursing education programs must offer students clinical placements to prepare them to practice competently, safely and ethically with patients of any age. We expect nursing students to get clinical experience they can apply to geriatric care regardless of where they are placed
- **Learning about intentional harm:**
 - We are developing information for educators about health care serial killers and intentional harm to integrate into their nursing programs

Educate long-term care home employers on what, when and how to report their concerns about a nurse's practice

- We launched a new section on cno.org just for employers that streamlines all needed information about what, when and how to report their concern about a nurse's practice
- We are testing a decision tree to help employers decide how to respond to adverse events involving nurses, including whether to report to us. Once approved, it will be available to employers

- We are working with the long-term care sector to identify areas of risk related to nursing care, and we are developing solutions

Revise CNO's Reporting Guide for employers, nurses and anyone working with a nurse so they clearly understand what, when and how to report any concerns about a nurse's practice

We launched our revised *Reporting Guide*. It includes easy-to-understand information about what, when and how to report a concern to us.

Revise CNO's reporting form for concerns about a nurse's practice, so it's easier for employers to complete and submit

We updated the **Reporting form** based on feedback.

It now includes:

- clearer instructions for completing the form so users are providing us with the most appropriate information
- a second contact person section, since more than one person may have witnessed the behaviour that is being reported
- more areas to list incidents, since the user might have multiple concerns about the nurse's practice
- the ability to submit the form electronically on cno.org

Educate nurses about their professional accountabilities to protect their patients and to report any concern about a nursing colleague's practice

- Our revised *Reporting Guide* includes information on a nurse's professional accountability to act in their patients' best interest and protect them from harm
- Our *Code of Conduct* describes the behaviour and conduct that all nurses are professionally accountable for.

Next steps

As always, CNO continues to find opportunities to improve. For example, we are conducting a public outreach strategy in 2020 for our *Code of Conduct*. This document explains what behaviours the public can expect from their nurses.

What is the College of Nurses of Ontario?

We regulate more than 180,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Practical Nurses and Nurse Practitioners in Ontario. Our sole mandate is to protect the public. We do this by ensuring Ontario nurses are fit to practice in a manner that maintains the public's confidence in the profession. For information on our processes and programs, please go to www.cno.org.