

COLLEGE OF NURSES OF ONTARIO'S Academic Reference Group

News to Use: October 2026

Regulatory Changes and Updates

New Controlled Substances Regulation Now in Effect

The federal government's new *Controlled Substances Regulations* (CSR) came into effect on **October 1, 2026**. The CSR consolidates several existing regulations currently under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* as well as brings together six class exemptions into a single, modernized regulation. The [Nurse Practitioner](#) standard has been revised to remove the restriction regarding prescribing two drugs: opium and coca leaves to align with the new CSR. To support NPs in understanding and applying the new CSR, new and revised NP web resources, including an [FAQ section](#), are available on [cno.org](#).

Modernizing Standards

Confidentiality and Privacy Standard

On September 24, 2026, CNO Council approved updates to the *Confidentiality and Privacy – Personal Health Information* standard, which will take effect **December 1, 2026**. These revisions are part of CNO's cyclical review cycle to keep standards evidence-based and reflective of current nursing practice. Changes include updated format, streamlined accountabilities and new expectations related to the use of technology and social media.

To facilitate implementation of the revised standard, CNO plans to provide a variety of resources, such as webinars, microlearning videos, and updated guidance documents. Several new [Practice Support FAQs](#) have already been published to support nurses with the application of the standard.

Tune in to CNO's webinar on **October 27, 2026**, at 12 p.m., to learn more about the changes. Registration information will be posted on [cno.org](#).

Scope of Practice and Medication Standards

On September 24, 2026, CNO Council approved updates to the *Scope of Practice* and *Medication* practice standards. Effective **March 1, 2027**, the changes will strengthen client safety, clarify nurses' accountabilities and support greater consistency in nursing practice across Ontario.

The updated standards include changes for all nurses and specific changes for nurses working in aesthetic services. The changes impacting **nurses across all practice settings** include:

- the expectation for authorized providers to assess a client before issuing a client-specific order

- clearer delegation requirements

Additionally, nurses practicing in **aesthetics services** will be required to:

- remain onsite for the entire procedure when delegating a procedure to someone who does not otherwise have the authority to perform the controlled act or requires delegation to perform it
- use client-specific orders, rather than directives, for treatments involving prescription drugs or controlled acts

CNO will use a variety of approaches to support implementation of the revised *Scope of Practice* and *Medication* standards, such as a new [Authorizing Mechanisms FAQ](#) to support better understanding of orders, directives and delegation. In addition, a new dedicated [Aesthetic Services](#) landing page has been launched.

Please continue to monitor the [Standards and Guidelines](#) webpage for updates.

Student Engagement

CNO is hosting a Conversations with CNO event, Engaging and Sharing for Students, on November 17, giving nursing students and new graduates an opportunity to connect with CNO staff in an open, informal setting. The interactive session will give participants opportunities to ask questions, share experiences, and hear different perspectives. As part of this initiative, CNO will also poll students to better understand their preferences for future discussion topics. The first discussion topic, "Transitioning from Student to an Independent and Accountable Nurse," will explore the realities of moving from student to professional practice, including the responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities of becoming a regulated nursing professional.

CNO will also be hosting **New Graduate Webinars on November 24 and December 1** to support those who have nearly or recently completed a nursing education program in Ontario. These webinars will explain how to become registered as a nurse in Ontario, including tips to help participants navigate the registration process. Participants will also have an opportunity to ask questions during a live Q&A.

Truth, Reconciliation and Ontario's Nursing Profession

CNO is pleased to announce the launch of a [new landing page on CNO.org dedicated to Truth and Reconciliation](#). This page is a hub that brings together all the key Indigenous-related content we have published so far and will be home to additional content we publish in the future. The page shares the position statement of one of our main partners in this work, the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC), as well as our approach to land acknowledgments, feature articles from *The Standard*, and much more. We invite you to explore the content on the page, and to check back as we add more items in the future.

Revised RN and RPN ELCs and a New Foundational Theme: Indigenous Cultural Humility and Cultural Safety

The Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators and Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators have completed the scheduled five-year review of the national Registered Nurse (RN) and Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) entry-level competencies (ELCs), in collaboration with all jurisdictions. The revised ELCs reflect current and emerging nursing practice, include new content and expanded language to provide greater clarity and context for existing competencies. The RPN ELCs have also transitioned to a role-based framework to support alignment and consistency across the Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner frameworks. The revised ELCs take effect in Ontario in September 2027.

CNO has also introduced a new foundational theme on Indigenous Cultural Humility and Cultural Safety within the program approval framework to support nursing education programs in preparing students to provide culturally safe and respectful care for First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. This work supports CNO's ongoing response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action 24 and its commitment to addressing anti-Indigenous racism by supporting consistent integration of TRC-related content across all nursing education programs.

CNO will support the implementation of the revised ELCs and new foundational theme through upcoming activities with academic partners. In November, CNO will host information sessions to provide further details about curriculum mapping, and evidence requirements for demonstrating integration. We shared information about these sessions, including registration details, with school administrators in September. To confirm your attendance, please complete the registration form [online](#).

Nursing data trends in Ontario

College of Nurses of Ontario Movement and Attrition Report

On June 24, 2026, CNO released its [CNO Movement and Attrition Report](#), which is now published on the [Nursing Statistics](#) page on CNO's website (Under **Recent Statistical Reports**). This report provides an overview of the major trends regarding nurses' movement into and out of Ontario, as well as within the profession. It highlights various key trends, including consistent net growth in both the nursing supply and workforce, along with considerable movement between nursing categories.

New Nursing Statistics Report

On August 27, 2026, CNO released its [Nursing Statistics Report 2026](#), providing the latest Ontario nursing data available to the public. The report highlights data and trends from the past year to help support health human resource planning, decision-making, and research. The report format helps to ensure that system partners have a comprehensive picture of the trends in nursing health human resources and can easily see the most significant patterns across all CNO data in one place.

You can find links to both the report and the dashboard, along with additional data and reports, on our [Nursing Statistics webpage](#).

Did You Know?

CNO's Education team supports academics with presentations about nursing regulation, standards of nursing practice, and related educational content for students. If your organization would like to arrange a virtual or in-person presentation, please contact the Education team at education@cnomail.org for more information.

Council Updates

For more information, please check our website: [Council Meeting Minutes](#).

Please share this update with other nursing educators at your school.