

*Scope of Practice:  
Professional Practice Series*



**ANBLPN**

Association of New Brunswick Licensed  
Practical Nurses

**AIAANB**

L'Association des Infirmier(ère)s Auxiliaires  
Autorisé(e)s du Nouveau-Brunswick

*The Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses (ANBLPN) is the regulatory authority for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) in New Brunswick. ANBLPNs mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical nursing care. ANBLPN sets, monitors, and enforces standards for entry into the profession, practical nurse education, registration, and professional conduct. Additionally, ANBLPN creates Standards of Practice, establishes a Code of Ethics, develops and implements a Continuing Competence Program and publishes policies and interpretive documents to support the practice of LPNs in New Brunswick.*

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## Scope of Practice

Scope of Practice is a general statement which refers to the activities that LPNs are authorized, educated and competent to perform and it provides the basis for the development of practice standards, competencies for entry-level practitioners and regulation. Scope of Practice also guides curriculum development for practical nursing programs, assists employers to determine appropriate care delivery models and helps inform the general public of the services LPNs are qualified to provide.

The legislated scope of practice for LPNs is outlined in the [LPN Act](#) (2014) and helps define the services that LPNs are educated and competent to provide for health promotion and the prevention of illness. The LPN Act also serves as a foundation for [Entry-Level Competencies](#) and [Standards of Practice](#) for the practical nurse profession.

ANBLPN often receives questions from employers and health professionals as to whether a specific task is within the scope of practice of a Licensed Practical Nurse. Within the health care system today, nursing professionals (LPNs and RNs) share many competencies and therefore the profession of nursing can no longer be defined by a list of tasks or activities. Rather, it is the *entire* scope of practice that makes a profession unique (NSCN, 2019). As such, the Canadian health care system is served best when the legal and professional scope of practice is:

- broad enough to support flexibility and respond to changing health care needs,
- enables nursing professionals to work to their full scope of competencies,
- free of restrictions and promotes role optimization, and
- provides support for intraprofessional collaboration (CNA, 2019).

## Components of Scope of Practice

An LPNs practice is influenced by three components; (1) Professional Scope of Practice, (2) Individual Scope of Practice and (3) Scope of Employment. These components are interrelated and may impact each LPNs scope of practice differently.

1. **Professional Scope of Practice** refers to the designated role, functions, and activities that LPNs are educated and authorized to perform within the practice of practical nursing. The scope of practice is set by the LPN Act and sets the practice boundaries for all LPNs in New Brunswick. The professional scope of practice can only be changed by a change in the legislation. LPNs are expected to advocate for optimized practice within the professional scope of practice.
2. **Individual Scope of Practice** represents an LPNs practice based on their current practice context, education, experience, and competencies. The individual scope of practice can be expanded or minimized by changes in the practice context and/or employer policies. Individual scope of practice can evolve over time as LPNs gain additional competencies in relation to their practice environments (NSCN, 2019).
3. **Scope of Employment** is the description of the LPN role that is defined by the employer through policies and job descriptions. The scope of employment has the biggest impact on an individual's scope of practice. LPNs are expected to optimize their individual scope of practice within

employer policies and/or advocate for policy change to support optimized practice. Scope of employment changes from employment setting to employment setting and LPNs are accountable to know what is expected of them in their current role. The individual scope of practice and scope of employment may not exceed the professional scope of practice.



Throughout an LPNs career, their Scope of Practice will expand to reflect new knowledge obtained and work experience. As nursing is a broad profession, there is no one LPN who can be competent in all areas of nursing and perform all activities that are within the authorized professional scope of practice. It is the responsibility of every LPN to assess their own competency level and know their individual scope of practice (CLPNNL, 2019).

Within these three components, the **Context of Practice** may also impact an LPNs scope of practice (SALPN, 2019). The context of practice plays an important role in determining care assignments and appropriate application of LPN practice for each employment setting.

When determining care assignments and the application of LPN practice, consideration should be given to three elements referred to as the Three Factor Framework; (1) the client's level of complexity and predictability, (2) the nursing professionals competence and (3) the practice environment (context of practice). For more guidance on the Three Factor Framework, please refer to our practice guideline: *Intraprofessional Collaboration; LPNs and RNs Working Together*.

## **Intraprofessional Collaboration & Scope of Practice**

Licensed Practical Nurses practice autonomously within a clinically collaborative relationship with other care providers, to provide professional nursing services to individuals of all ages, groups (including families) and communities, in a variety of care settings. *Nursing Services* is the application of practical nursing knowledge and theory in the:

- assessment of clients;
- collaboration in the development of the nursing plan of care;
- implementation of the nursing plan of care, and;
- evaluation of the client.

LPNs are autonomous practitioners, however, they also work in collaboration with others and therefore their level of autonomy to perform interventions independently varies in relation to a client's care needs and the practice environment. Even though an LPN may have the competence and professional scope of practice to perform an intervention, it does not mean it is appropriate for all practice settings and all clients.

Individual LPNs and RNs within the collaborative relationship share the accountability to determine the level and intensity of clinical collaboration that is required based on: the needs of the client, the individual/professional capacity of the nursing professionals involved and the available supports in the practice environment (Three Factor Framework). As the needs of the client increase in complexity, become less predictable and have a higher risk for a negative outcome, the need for clinical collaboration and consultation increases. The employer retains the accountability to have policies, resources, and procedures in place to support ongoing clinical collaboration between the LPN and RN.

NOTE: If an LPN is self employed, he/she must adhere to ANBLPN Self Employment Guidelines. For more information about self employment, please refer to: [Self Employment Guidelines](#).

## **Scope of Practice of the Graduate Practical Nurse**

The scope of practice of the graduate practical nurse (GPN) is consistent with that of the LPN. LPNs must be aware that the GPN will have a limited individual scope of practice because they are new practitioners. The GPN works collaboratively or under the guidance and direction of a licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, medical practitioner, or any health care provider authorized to provide such consultation, guidance, or direction, within their individual scope of practice, competence, and education.

GPNs may administer all prescribed medication within the professional scope of practice and in which they have the individual competency to do so and have been authorized to do so by the organization's policy and procedures. GPNs are not authorized to assume the role of the practical nurse in charge. For more information on a GPNs scope of practice please refer to ANBLPNs [GPN Policy](#).

## Advanced Competencies & Scope of Practice

At times, competencies may be added to an LPN's individual scope of practice that traditionally, may not have been part of LPN practice. These new, advanced competencies may be the result of a specific need of a particular practice environment. In these circumstances, ANBLPN must be contacted to determine that the competency is within the professional scope of practice as noted in the LPN Act (NSCN, 2019).

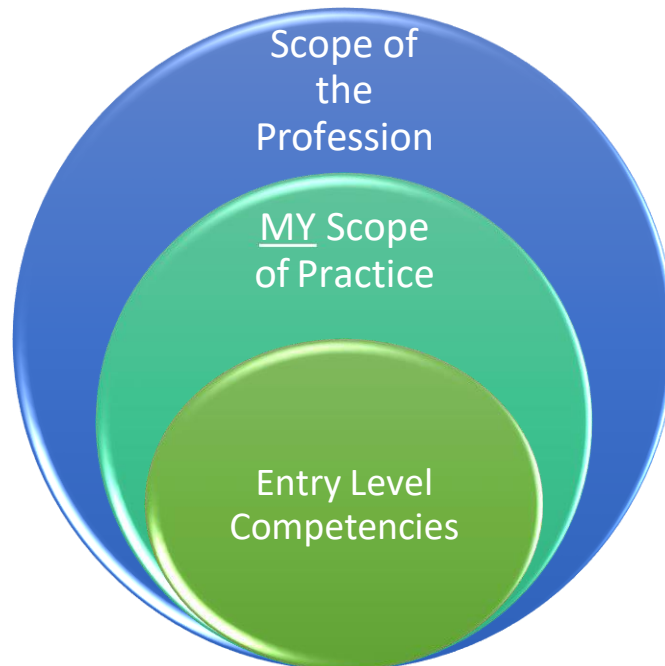
Competencies may be added to an individual's scope of practice providing that:

- the LPN has received the necessary education and clinical mentorship to perform the intervention;
- the intervention is supported by an employer policy;
- the competency is consistent with the legislated scope of practice of the profession;
- the competency is not prohibited by any legislation; and
- the LPN is able to attain and maintain the competency

For more information on Advanced Competencies, please refer to the position statement [Advanced Competencies for the Licensed Practical Nurse](#).

## LPN Practice Decision-Making Tool

To determine if you are permitted to complete a specific nursing intervention you must first ask yourself if the intervention is within your scope of practice. Your scope of practice is determined by your education, individual competence, and authorization. It is vital that LPNs understand the difference between their individual scope of practice versus the scope of the profession and that this will vary from person to person.



*My Scope of Practice vs. Scope of the Profession (adapted from CLPNNL, 2019).*

ANBLPN has created a tool to further assist LPNs and employers to determine safe and authorized practice for LPNs in New Brunswick. The tool is based on legislation and regulation, the needs of the client, the nursing professional's competence, and the practice environment. LPNs are accountable to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics across all practice settings.

## NURSING INTERVENTION DECISION-MAKING TOOL

### EDUCATION

Did you learn how to perform this activity:

- in your practical nursing program (entry-level competency)?
- as part of your continuing, post-basic education?



CONTINUE



STOP & CONSULT

### INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE

Have you been able to attain and maintain your ability to carry out the nursing intervention safely?



CONTINUE



STOP & CONSULT

### AUTHORIZATION

Is the nursing intervention part of the professional scope of practice AND does your employer authorize the intervention?



CONTINUE



STOP & CONSULT

## CONCLUSION

LPN practice cannot be viewed as a list of tasks and competencies, nor is it static. LPN practice evolves over time due to the changing competency levels of each practitioner, the health care needs of clients and the practice environment.

It remains vital that LPNs understand the contextual nature of their professional scope of practice. It is important to be able to articulate this to clients and other members of the health care team. As with all aspects of practice, licensed practical nurses are accountable to recognize when they can work independently and when they are required to work in consultation/collaboration with a registered nurse, pharmacist or duly qualified practitioner.



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