

NPR-FIPP Project Summary

Background

In January 2018, the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR)¹ agreed to explore a new model for Nurse Practitioner (NP) regulation. Following work that articulated a vision and [recommendations](#) for NP regulation in Canada, the CCRNR Board commissioned the Nurse Practitioner Regulation Framework Implementation Plan Project (NPR-FIPP) in 2020 with a priority **that NP entry-level education programs in Canada will prepare NPs for practice across the life span in all practice settings.**

The impetus for a new model for NP regulation

The role and practice of NPs has changed and evolved since they were first regulated in the 1990's. Currently, NPs are educated and regulated in most Canadian provinces and territories based on their category or stream of practice², including the categories of Family/All Ages (or Primary Health Care), Adult, Pediatric, and Neonatal. NPs start out their professional experience as Registered Nurses (RNs) and bring their RN experience and knowledge to their NP practice.

Although NP categories of practice were put in place to address population needs and focus NP education and knowledge in particular areas of healthcare (which they have done and continue to do well), there have been challenges. These include:

- Smaller numbers of NPs in some categories (e.g., Adult, Pediatric, and Neonatal) has made it more difficult to maintain category-specific education programs.
- Small numbers of NPs in each category can also make it difficult to have valid and reliable entry-level licensure exams in place.
- There is currently a limited number of NPs in specific categories to warrant developing and running re-entry or bridging programs that support regulatory processes and enable NPs to change categories if desired.
- Healthcare employers and partners continue to seek and request NPs in more roles with more diverse skills to help meet health population needs today and into the future.

There has also been evidence showing an opportunity to streamline NP entry-to-practice requirements.

A [Practice Analysis Study of Nurse Practitioners](#) completed in May 2015 and NP entry-level competencies completed in 2016 collectively showed that NPs across practice categories (Family /All Ages or Primary Health Care, Adult, Pediatric, and Neonatal) have common competencies and behavioural indicators. They further showed that foundational, entry-level NP practice across Canada does not differ greatly, regardless of where the NP practices, or in what category of practice.

¹ The Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR) is a national collaborative of nursing regulators for interprovincial/territorial, national, and global regulatory matters. The collaborative promotes the advancement of excellence in the regulation of registered nurses in the public interest. All 12 of Canada's provincial/territorial registered nurse regulators are members of CCRNR.

² Categories of practice can also be referred to as streams of practice or speciality categories in different jurisdictions.

Also, education program curriculum assessments conducted by regulators have shown that education courses for the NP categories of practice are similar and that NP categories typically only differ based on the completion of a particular course and/or clinical experience.

These challenges and opportunities provided the reasons to reconsider how NPs are educated and regulated across Canadian jurisdictions. They informed the decision that NPs would be educated in a similar manner – to provide care across the life span in all practice settings.

Objectives

The NPR-FIPP is putting in place a model of NP regulation that does not register or license NPs with categories when they begin practicing. NPs across Canada are to be educated based on common NP entry-level competencies (NP ELCs), take a common NP entry-level exam, and be ready to provide care across the life span in all practice settings as beginning practitioners. NPs will continue to develop knowledge and expertise over time and, if desired, additional specialization. Regulators will no longer regulate different categories of NP practice but will continue to require NPs to practice within their individual competence and regulated scope of practice.

The illustration below shows the differences between an RN, and – in the new regulatory model – an NP at entry-to-practice (when they first start practicing), and an NP post entry-to-practice (after they have been practicing as an NP).

Registered Nurse (RN)	NP at Entry-to-Practice	NP Post Entry-to-Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General RN education • Common entry-level exam across Canadian jurisdictions • Regulated in a single category of practice • Practices in a variety of settings • Gains knowledge, experience, and specialization over time and as applicable • Opportunities for career mobility and progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings their RN knowledge and experience • Educated to diagnose and manage care across the life span in all practice settings – based on the NP-ELCs • Common entry-level exam across Canadian jurisdictions • Regulated as an NP (not by category of practice) • Varied opportunities to begin NP practice – across the life span in all practice settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to gain knowledge and experience • May choose to gain additional NP specialization – based on interests and healthcare needs and opportunities • Areas of practice or specialization may change over time • Continue to be regulated as an NP (not by category of practice) • Opportunities for career mobility and progression

This change is to enable the appropriate level of NP regulation in the public's interest and foster a more mobile and responsive NP workforce – one that recognizes NPs desire for growth, career progression, and enables NPs to move and progress across practice settings, domains of practice, and employers.

Milestones to the new model

Below is a description of past, ongoing, and future activities to implement the new model of NP regulation across Canada.

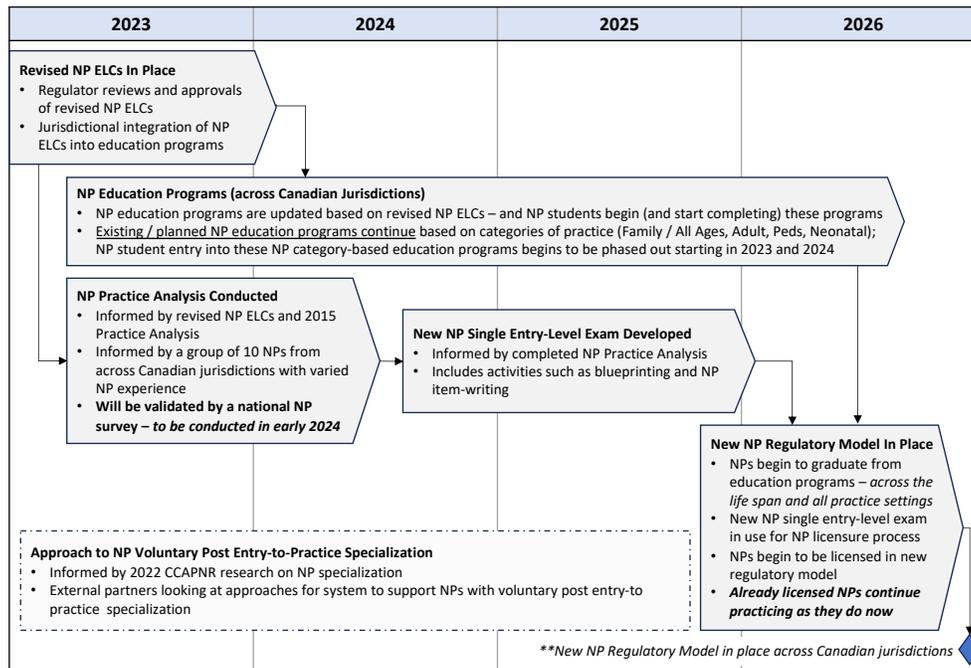
- ⇒ **2018 – 2019:** NP Regulation Practices Project commissioned by the CCRNR Board with a mandate to develop recommendations on basic elements of a model for NP regulation. NPs were consulted as part of this process.
- ⇒ **2020:** NPR-FIPP created to implement the NP Regulation Practice Project recommendations.
- ⇒ **2021 – 2022:** Steering Committee³ started work on the NPR-FIPP project and revised the NP Entry-Level Competencies (for more information on how the NP ELCs were developed, and who was involved and provided input, see the [NP Entry-Level Competencies Development Report](#)).
- ⇒ **2022:** Canadian Centre for Advanced Practice Nursing Research (CCAPNR) completed their research focused on advanced practice nursing specialty practice. The outcomes from this are informing healthcare partners' next steps regarding NP voluntary post entry-to-practice specialization.
- ⇒ **2023 – Ongoing:** Provincial/territorial regulators are reviewing, approving, and implementing the NP Entry-Level Competencies. Implementation is pending in a few provinces where further policy work or governmental approval is required according to their regulation.
- ⇒ **2023:** Meazure Learning secured as NP examination vendor to conduct practice analysis and develop the single entry-to-practice NP exam.
- ⇒ **2023:** Practice Analysis Project Advisory Committee of NPs formed and will be responsible for supporting Meazure Learning in conducting the NP practice analysis.
- ⇒ **The following project activities are now underway or planned:**
 - Completion of the NP practice analysis, including a national survey of NPs in early 2024.
 - Supporting Meazure Learning to develop the NP single entry-level exam based on the findings from the practice analysis (includes exam blueprinting, item-writing, etc.).

The new model for NP regulation is expected to be implemented across jurisdictions in 2026 when NPs start to graduate from programs based on the NP-ELCs (across the life span in all practice settings) and when the new single entry-level exam is ready.

Note: The status of currently registered or licensed NPs will not be affected with this regulatory change.

³ The NPR-FIPP is guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from 11 Canadian provincial and territorial regulatory bodies who have expertise in nursing regulation and are responsible for regulating NPs in their jurisdiction

Below is a chart showing the timeline of activities from 2023 to 2026, when the new regulatory model is to be in place across jurisdictions.



Quick facts

- ⇒ There are over 8,000 NPs currently registered across Canadian provinces and territories.
- ⇒ Just over 80% of Canadian NPs are registered in the Family/All Ages category, about 14% in the Adult category, 4% in the Pediatric category, and about 0.5% in the Neonatal category.
- ⇒ The NP Family/All Ages or primary health care education programs most closely align with the new model of NP practice. However, these programs will still need to reflect the revised NP ELCs including preparing future NPs with foundational competencies needed to practice across the lifespan and in all practice settings.
- ⇒ Although the term ‘generalist NP’ has often been used to explain NP scope of practice with this regulatory change, the word ‘generalist’ is not accurate when used in this way. The phrase ‘NPs will be prepared to practice across all ages in all practice settings’ more accurately reflects the NP scope of practice and the opportunities provided through this new regulatory model.

To read more about the NPR-FIPP or to stay informed about project activities, visit the project webpage at <http://www.ccrnr.ca/npr-fipp.html> – there you will find several issues of project newsletters, information about the NP ELCs, questions and answers, and other resources.

If you have any questions about the project or would like to suggest information for future project communications, please contact communications@ccnr.ca.