



College of **Registered Nurses**  
of Newfoundland & Labrador

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# Understanding Individual Scope of Practice

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## Understanding Your Individual Scope of Practice

RNs/NPs often encounter situations where they must reflect whether they are permitted to perform a particular competency, i.e., it is within my scope of practice? Am I allowed to do this? This may be because the competency is not traditionally a nursing responsibility, or the RN/NP may not feel qualified or comfortable to perform the competency safely.

To determine if a competency is within their individual scope of practice<sup>1</sup>, RNs/NPs must follow a clinical decision-making process and reflect on the following questions and be able to answer yes to each question before proceeding:

**Is the Competency within my Legislative Scope of Practice? If yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.**

- Does legislation (federal and/or provincial legislation) prevent me from performing this competency?
- Do I understand how legislation, employer policies, or the College's Standards of Practice and relevant documents impact my nursing practice and limits or authorizes my ability to perform the competency?
- Does the competency align with RN or NP scope of practice?
- Am I aware and able to meet my standards of practice?

**Do I have the Necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Judgment to Perform the Competency? If yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.**

- Am I the most appropriate care provider?
- Do I know what is required to perform the competency safely, effectively, and ethically?
- Am I educated to perform this? Was my education sufficient to gain the theory and practical experience necessary to perform the competency safely?
- Am I competent? Do I have the necessary knowledge, skills, and judgment to:
  - Assess the appropriateness of performing the competency?
  - Perform the competency?
  - Manage the outcomes (intended or unintended/unintended consequences) of care before, during, and after the competency?
- Is my knowledge current and based on best practice, evidence-informed literature, or research?
- Have I identified the potential outcomes? Do I know the associated benefits and risks of the competency?
- Will there be support for continuing education programs to maintain competence?
- Does the performance of this competency promote safe, competent, and ethical client care?

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<sup>1</sup>For further information on scope of practice and the bibliography, refer to the most current version of the College's Scope of Practice Framework.



**Is the Competency supported by my Employer and Practice Setting? If Yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.**

- Am I authorized to perform this? Is this competency within my documented role/job description?
- Are there appropriate authorizing mechanisms (direct orders, care directives, etc.) in place to support the performance of the competency?
- Does my employer/organization permit, and support me, to perform this competency on my nursing unit or in my practice setting?
- Am I aware of and able to follow any relevant employer/organizational policies and/or clinical decision support tools, practice guidelines or protocols, etc.?
- Are the necessary resources (human and material) available now and in the future to support me in providing safe, competent, and ethical care before, during, and after the competency?

**Is Performing the Competency in the Best Interest of the Client? If Yes, Proceed to Next Question? If No, Stop and Consult.**

- Is this competency appropriate for this client at this time in this situation?
- Do I have the appropriate informed consent of the client? Am I aware of, and able to meet, the consent requirements appropriate for the situation (e.g., verbal, implied, written, substitute decision-making, etc.)?

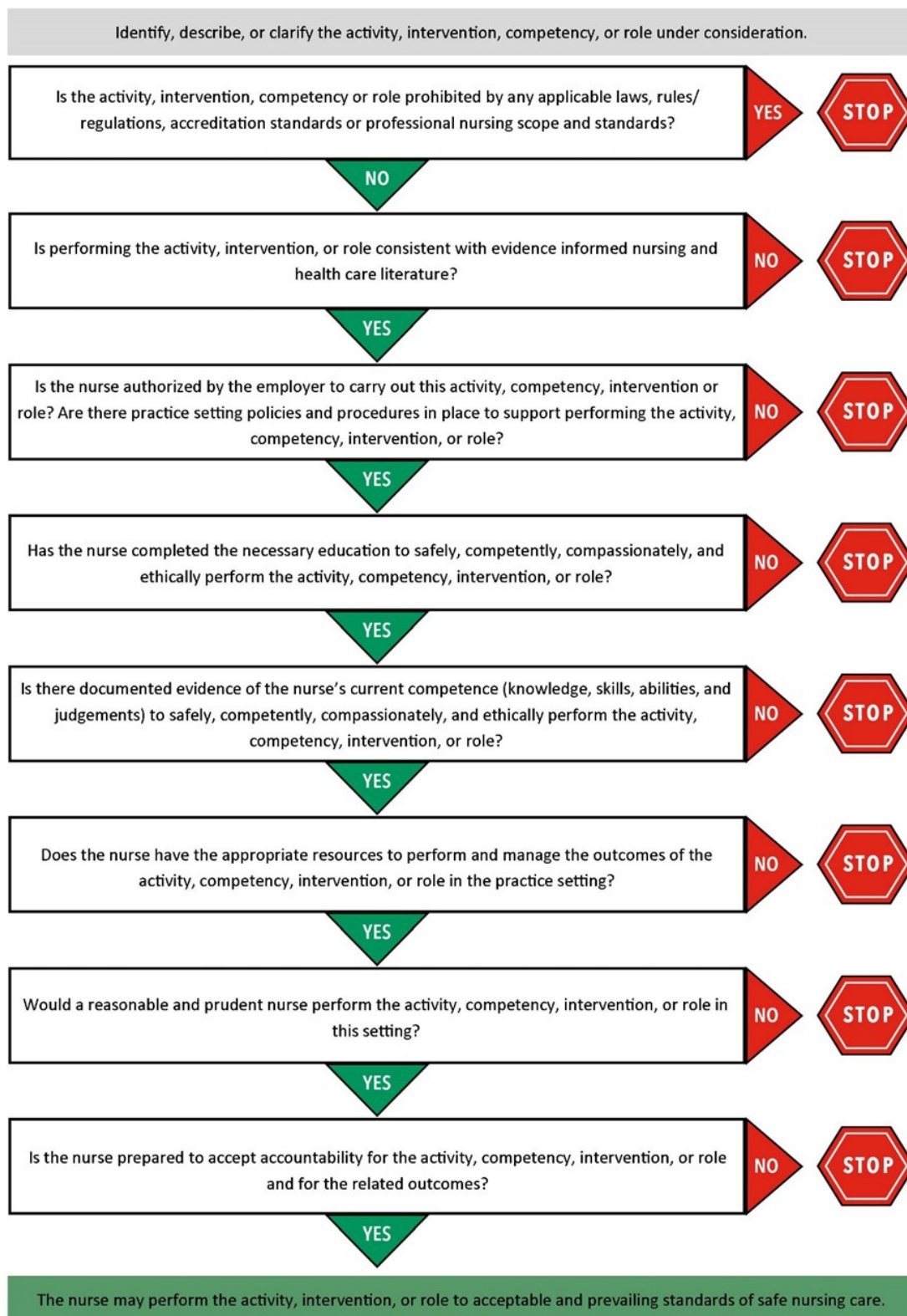
**Do I Assume Individual Accountability when Acting within my Individual Scope of Practice? If Yes, the RN/NP is Most Likely to Proceed to Perform the Competency. If No, Stop and Consult.**

- Do I assume individual accountability for my decisions and actions and for the related outcomes?
- Can I provide rationale for my decisions and actions?
- Would a reasonable, prudent nurse perform the competency?

If the RN/NP answers “yes” to all reflections, then the RN/NP is most likely able to perform the competency. If the RN/NP is uncertain or answers “no” to any of these reflective questions, then more information will be required before proceeding any further. The RN/NP may refer their questions to their manager and/or the professional practice department, etc. RNs/NPs are also encouraged to connect with a College Nursing Consultant: Policy and Practice if they have questions related to scope of practice.



### Scope of Practice Decision Tree





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