

**The Nova Scotia Recreational Professionals  
in Health  
Code of Ethics**

Prepared with the assistance of:  
**The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Public Affairs (CCEPA)**

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# **1. Introduction**

The Nova Scotia Recreation Professionals in Health (NSRPH) is a non-profit Association registered under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. The Association's activities are governed by its By-Laws.

The Association contacted the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Public Affairs (CCEPA) for assistance in developing a Code of Ethics to ensure that the Association and its members exhibit a high level of professional conduct. Under the By-Laws there is provision for two classes of membership of the Association – Active and Associate Members. There is also provision for the Association to expel members.

Attention to ethical standards is an important element of the NSRPH's professional practice and the desire to establish a Code of Ethics is an important step in the organization's evolution and a key to their eventually seeking more formal recognition by the NS Department of Health and Wellness as a professional association.

While there are no formal provincial requirements for recreation professionals, the Association has its own desired Standards of Practice for Recreation as a Therapy and Service, developed in conjunction with the Therapeutic Recreation Association of Atlantic Canada (TRAAC).

## **1.1 Purpose and Objectives**

It was agreed that CCEPA would facilitate a process with the NSRPH to develop a Code of Ethics.

## **1.2 The Process**

The process for developing this Code of Ethics represents an important learning opportunity for the organization. It was initiated with members of the twelve person Board of Directors in a preliminary meeting on January 28, 2011, a detailed follow up meeting on March 11, 2011, a meeting with the Standards and Ethics Committee on April 15, 2011 and a meeting with the Board on May 13, 2011. This draft was developed from those discussions and will be the subject of regional consultations.

1. At a two hour working session on March 11, 2011, the process and its objectives were discussed and a work plan agreed. The discussion continued with a consideration of values which should underlie the code. A draft code was developed and, in the subsequent discussions noted above, a number of refinements were made.
2. Each Board member will take the draft document to their regional divisions for discussion and seek feedback.
3. The Board will then consider this feedback and make any further revisions.

4. The final document will be presented to the general membership at the Annual General Meeting in the fall of 2011.

### 1.3 Definitions

In order to have a common basis for communication, several key terms – values, ethics, ethical questions and ethical framework - are defined:

<b>Definitions of Key Terms</b>	
<b>Values</b>	basic beliefs/ideas upon which our behaviour (decisions and actions) is based
<b>Ethics</b>	how these values are used to do right or wrong
<b>Ethical questions</b>	questions which arise when values are in conflict
<b>Ethical framework</b>	a way of supporting employees in dealing with ethical questions

An ethical framework:

- guides the behaviour of all members in the conduct of their responsibilities and interactions with stakeholders;
- becomes especially important when there are ethical questions (when one or more values are in tension and when there is no clear answer);
- improves responsiveness to the ethical dimensions in the profession by promoting decisions that are more thoroughly reasoned and that balance competing values, wishes, and preferences; and
- informs decision-making, does not replace it.

### 1.4 Components of an Ethical Framework

An ethical framework contains four components – a values component, a guide to implementing the values, an organizational component and a procedural component.

The following content of this report contains separate sections on each ethical framework component, as follows:

## Code of Ethics for Nova Scotia Recreation Professionals in Health

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Values component	Mission, vision and values statements which reflect an organization's key reason for existence, where it wants to go and what it values most.	Section 2
Implementing the values	Showing how values are translated into a Code of Ethics which outlines guidelines for behaviour and action on the part of members and the Board.	Section 3
Organizational component	Establishment of a committee to monitor the implementation of the Code of Ethics and deal with ethical questions.	Section 4
Procedural component	Outlining the process by which the Committee will address ethical issues or deal with reported breaches of the Code of Ethics	Section 5

## 2. Values Component

The NSRPH has well established Mission, Vision and Values statements; a key element of an ethical framework. The statements are prominently displayed on their website and in their publications.

### Mission

The NSRPH advocates for the recognition of recreation and leisure as an important element in individual well-being and the development and maintenance of healthy life-styles. The Association supports its members by facilitating professional development and providing a network to enhance communication, exchange information and resources among and beyond our membership.

### Vision

To be leaders in providing and promoting excellence in recreation as a therapy and service through evidence based practice.

### Values

<b>Respect for human dignity</b>	We respect the dignity of all, valuing each individual's freedom of choice, right to take risks they find acceptable and right to be involved in appropriate decisions
<b>Honesty and Integrity</b>	We are committed, trustworthy, honest and reliable, exhibiting regard for confidentiality and privacy and demonstrating loyalty.
<b>Fairness and equity</b>	We believe in treating people fairly, without bias or favouritism, and are committed to inclusion and equitable treatment for all.
<b>Accountability</b>	We accept responsibility for our actions. Our lines of communications are open and we are transparent in our reporting, operations, and financial matters.
<b>Collaboration</b>	We value partnerships in our workplaces, with other professional associations and among our members
<b>Excellence</b>	We are committed to excellence in our programming and our operations, working from a base of competence, grounded in research, and with due regard for safety.

### 3. Implementing NSRPH's Values

Critical elements of each value are identified from two perspectives:

- NSRPH members
- NSPRH Board

The following tables contain guidelines for behaviour and can be used in dealing with ethical issues that arise.

#### 3.1 Implementing the respect value

<b>RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY</b>	
<b>We respect the dignity of all, valuing each individual's freedom of choice, right to take risks they find acceptable and right to be involved in appropriate decisions</b>	
<b>Members are expected to ...</b>	<b>The Board is expected to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat each client as an individual</li> <li>• Respect the client's autonomy and independence</li> <li>• Respect each individual's freedom of choice</li> <li>• Respect each individual's right to take risks they consider acceptable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct its Board and committee meetings with respect for divergent viewpoints</li> <li>• Conduct membership meetings, including the AGM, with due regard for the opinions of all its members</li> <li>• Promote respect among its members</li> <li>• Model respectful behaviour</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Implementing the honesty and integrity value

<b>HONESTY AND INTEGRITY</b>	
<b>We are committed, trustworthy, honest and reliable, exhibiting regard for confidentiality and privacy and demonstrating loyalty.</b>	
<b>Members are expected to ...</b>	<b>The Board is expected to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Act honestly in all aspects of their work</li><li>● Treat personal information in confidence</li><li>● Respect clients' privacy</li><li>● Avoid conflicts of interest</li><li>● Honestly represent their own credentials and experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Conduct the affairs of the organization with honesty and integrity</li><li>● Ensure the statutory requirements of the Association's registration are fulfilled</li><li>● Handle the finances of the Association with accuracy, honesty and transparency</li><li>● Respect the confidentiality of information about members and clients</li></ul>

### 3.3 Implementing the fairness and equity value

<b>FAIRNESS AND EQUITY</b>	
<b>We believe in treating people fairly, without bias or favouritism, and are committed to inclusion and equitable treatment for all.</b>	
<b>Members are expected to ...</b>	<b>The Board is expected to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Treat all clients fairly</li><li>● Avoid bias or favouritism towards any client</li><li>● Foster inclusiveness by developing and delivering programs that allow for participation by clients of differing abilities and interests</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Treat all the members of the Association fairly</li><li>● Be pro-active in encouraging active participation by members</li><li>● Encourage participation in the Association's leadership from a diversity of members</li></ul>

### 3.4 Implementing the accountability value

<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	
<b>We accept responsibility for our actions. Our lines of communications are open and we are transparent in our reporting, operations, and financial matters.</b>	
<b>Members are expected to ...</b>	<b>The Board is expected to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● demonstrate a positive work ethic</li> <li>● take responsibility for their actions</li> <li>● engage in clear communication with clients, co-workers, professional peers, and other members</li> <li>● bring dedication and loyalty to their professional responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● work hard in the interests of the Association</li> <li>● engage in clear communication with its stakeholders</li> <li>● be transparent in its reporting, operations and financial stewardship</li> <li>● fulfil its fiduciary duty with due diligence</li> </ul>

### 3.5 Implementing the collaboration value

<b>COLLABORATION</b>	
<b>We value partnerships in our workplaces, with other professional associations and among our members</b>	
<b>Members are expected to.....</b>	<b>The Board is expected to.....</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● work cooperatively with other professional staff within their work facilities</li><li>● collaborate with volunteers</li><li>● collaborate with clients and their families</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● promote collaboration with other professional organizations with complementary missions</li><li>● encourage collaboration among the members</li></ul>

### 3.6 Implementing the excellence value

<b>EXCELLENCE</b>	
<b>We are committed to excellence in our programming and our operations, working from a base of competence, grounded in research and with due regard for safety.</b>	
<b>Members are expected to ...</b>	<b>The Board is expected to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● bring to their position the appropriate skill set and experience</li> <li>● work towards implementation of the desired Standards of Practice</li> <li>● perform their responsibilities competently</li> <li>● ground their practice in relevant research</li> <li>● commit to quality in program/service development and delivery</li> <li>● exercise their duties with commitment, and passion</li> <li>● conduct their work with due regard for the safety of participants</li> <li>● advocate for the profession by educating people about the skill sets recreation professionals bring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● maintain and promulgate desirable standards of practice in terms of education, preparation and competencies</li> <li>● support members working to implement the Standards of Practice in their own practice settings</li> <li>● conduct the business of the Association with regard to best practices in governance</li> <li>● exercise leadership in an informed, inclusive and consensual way</li> </ul>

## 4. Organizational Component: The Standards and Ethics Committee

Oversight of this Policy and its implementation are assigned to the Standards and Ethics Committee, a standing committee established by the Board of Directors.

This section sets out the role and functions of this Committee with respect to the Code of Ethics. The Committee's role is to educate, assist and monitor the implementation of the Code of Ethics by helping the Association's members and its Board of Directors to fulfill their respective responsibilities in accordance with the Association's mission, vision and values.

The Committee should be advisory and assistive and report to the Board of Directors. It should not have decision making authority. It will provide a forum in which all perspectives regarding an ethical question can be heard.

### 4.1 Role and Functions

The functions of the Standards and Ethics Committee will include educating, advising, and consulting with members and the Board about ethical issues that arise in the conduct of the members' work.

In particular, the Committee would:

1. Take the lead in educating the members about the rationale behind and the content of the Code of Ethics.
2. Help members and those with whom they work to gain a fuller understanding of the types of issues that have ethical implications.
3. Work to encourage compliance with the Code of Ethics.
4. Provide a forum and a process for discussion of ethical issues - hearing issues brought to it, and aiding in resolving ethical conflicts or dilemmas.
5. Work with members who breach the Code of Ethics to understand the ethical issues that have arisen and assist the members to become compliant.
6. Report to the Board and make recommendations about any unresolved ethical problems involving members, including any recommendations about expulsion.
7. Make recommendations to the Board about policy issues with regard to Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

### 4.2 Membership

The Standards and Ethics Committee as a standing committee of the Board should have representation from the Board. To broaden the skill sets of the committee, additional members should be appointed by the Board. To ensure some diversity of experience and

perspective the Committee should have a minimum membership of four, including the Chair who should be appointed by the Board.

The key characteristics in appointing members should be their:

- Openness - the nature of ethical questions is often complex and may defy simple answers. Members should be open to learning so that they can better understand ethical dilemmas and how to resolve them;
- Fairness – members should recognise that different individuals may have different perspectives on ethical dilemmas and consider carefully all of the expressed opinions. In particular, it is important to hear all sides of the story;
- Positive outlook - given that many ethical dilemmas are challenging, the members must be positively inclined towards problem-solving and finding appropriate resolutions;
- Sensitivity - Committee members need to be able to deliberate ethical issues with due regard for the rights of the member, the people with whom the member works and the requirements of the Board.

### **4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation**

As implementation of the Code of Ethics proceeds, the Committee should report regularly to the Board on progress and any difficulties that have arisen. The Committee should also provide the Board with an Annual Report on implementation, including an overview of the types of ethical issues that have arisen, the number of cases where the Committee's advice has been sought and the resolution of any issues.

No later than one year after implementation, the effectiveness of the process and the role of the Committee should be evaluated by the Board. The input of members, workplace colleagues and others where appropriate, will help the Board and the Committee to assess the implementation process, the acceptance of the Code of Ethics and identify any new needs and future initiatives for the Committee.

### **4.4 Terms of Reference**

The proposed Terms of Reference of the Standards and Ethics Committee are contained in Appendix A.

## 5. Procedural Component

This section sets out the key elements of how the Standards and Ethics Committee should operate with respect to ethical issues.

### 5.1 Meetings of the Committee

There will be two types of meetings – regular and event-driven.

**Regular meetings** should be scheduled periodically, three to four times per year, to assess the operation of the Code of Ethics, to deal with any ongoing policy or implementation matters, and to develop educational and monitoring processes.

**Event-driven meetings**, which will be scheduled as necessary and with appropriate timeliness, will result from two situations:

- (i) To address requests from members or the Board for advice on specific ethical issues
- (ii) To deal with reported breaches of the Code of Ethics.

### 5.2 Procedures of the Committee

When the Committee receives a request for advice on an ethical issue, it will convene to discuss that issue and offer advice and guidance to the requester. It will also notify the Board of the issue and the advice it has offered.

When the Committee receives a reported about a possible breach of the Code by a member it will convene to discuss the report, bearing in mind that its primary role is education and assistance. Appendix B outlines procedures that should be followed.

The framework outlined in Appendix C may be helpful in working through the issues.

## **Appendix A: Standards and Ethics Committee Terms of Reference**

**Status:** The Committee is a standing committee established by the Board of Directors under Section 58 of the Association's By-Laws.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Committee is to oversee the development and implementation of two policy documents - Standards of Practice for Recreation as a Therapy and Service (in conjunction with the Therapeutic Recreation Association of Atlantic Canada) and the Code of Ethics for the Association - and to advise and make recommendations to the Board on these matters.

### **Membership:**

1. There shall be a minimum of four (4) members appointed by the Association's Board of Directors; at least two of those members will also be members of the Board.
2. The Chair will be appointed by the Board.

### **Operations:**

1. The Committee shall normally hold regular meetings 3-4 times per year.
2. The Committee will hold additional meetings to address issues that arise with respect to the implementation of either of the policy documents.
3. A quorum shall be 3 members.
4. Terms of office will be 3 years.

### **Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Take the lead in educating the members about the rationale behind and the content of the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics;
2. Promote the Standards of Practice, assist members and those with whom they work to gain a fuller understanding of the importance of Standards and how to use them.
3. Promote the Code of Ethics, assist members and those with whom they work to gain a fuller understanding of the importance of professional ethics.
4. Raise awareness of the types of issues that have ethical implications and encourage compliance with the Code of Ethics;
5. Provide a forum and a process for discussion of ethical issues - hearing issues brought to the Committee, and aiding in resolving ethical conflicts or dilemmas;
6. Work with members who breach the Code of Ethics to understand the ethical issues that have arisen and assist the members to become compliant;
7. Report to the Board and make recommendations about any unresolved ethical problems involving members, including any recommendations about expulsion.
8. Make recommendations to the Board about policy issues with regard to Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

## Appendix B: Procedures for Considering a Report of an Ethical Breach

### Informal procedures

1. The Committee's approach to dealing with possible breaches of the Code of Ethics will be progressive, seeking to resolve issues at the lowest level possible. Every effort will be made to resolve reported breaches of the Code of Ethics using informal procedures.
2. The Committee will advise the member that there has been a report of a breach of the Code of Ethics and invite them to share their perspective with the Committee.
3. The Committee will work with the member to review the Code of Ethics, identify the breach and suggest appropriate changes of conduct to achieve compliance. The emphasis will be on education and assistance to the member in becoming compliant.
4. The decision framework in Appendix C may be helpful in working through the issues.

### Formal procedures

1. In the case of repeated breaches of the Code of Ethics by a member, or a single particularly serious breach, the Committee may move to more formal procedures.
2. To move to formal procedures, a formal written complaint must be submitted to the Committee. This complaint will be sent to the member within five (5) working days of its receipt and s/he will be asked to respond in writing within ten (10) working days.
3. The Committee will work with the member, in a timely manner, to determine whether a satisfactory resolution is possible, using the decision framework in Appendix C, including inviting the member to attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss the complaint, the member's perspective and a potential resolution.
4. If such a resolution can be reached, it shall be documented and a copy of that documentation provided to the member, retained in the Committee's files and reported to the Board for information.
5. Where a resolution cannot be reached, the Committee will report to the Board.
6. The Board shall consider the matter and, should it decide that there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics sufficiently serious as to warrant expulsion it will so advise the member in writing and provide them with an opportunity to respond in writing.
7. In the event the Board decides to proceed with expulsion, following this exchange of correspondence, it will follow the procedures laid out in Section 13 of the Association's By-Laws:

### Section 13

1. An Active Member or an Associate Member may be expelled by a Special Resolution of the members passed at a General or Special meeting.

2. The notice of a Special Resolution for the purpose of expulsion shall be accompanied by a brief statement of the reason or reasons for the proposed expulsion.
3. The person who is the subject of the proposed Special Resolution for expulsion shall be provided notice, in writing, at least 30 days in advance of the meeting when the proposed Special Resolution shall be considered.
4. The person who is the subject of the proposed Special Resolution for expulsion shall be given the opportunity to be heard at the meeting before the Special Resolution is put to a vote.

## Appendix C: A Decision Framework for Considering Ethical Issues

1. Identify the ethical issue
  - a. What is the nature of the concern? What section of the Code of Ethics has allegedly been breached? What value is at stake?
  - b. Who is affected by this situation? Is it an inter-personal situation, is a group affected?
2. Collect information
  - a. What factual information is available about the situation?
  - b. Has the person raising the issue spoken with the member about it?
  - c. What does the member have to say about it?
  - d. Who else should be consulted about what happened?
  - e. Do other individuals have relevant information?
  - f. Has sufficient information been gathered to make an assessment of what happened?
3. Identify options for action
  - a. Can this matter be resolved at the level of the Committee and the member?
  - b. What options for action are available?
  - c. Will selecting one of these options help to resolve the issue?
  - d. What are the pros and cons of each? Which option will be fairest to all concerned? Which is most likely to produce an outcome that is most respectful to human dignity?
4. Discuss options with the member
  - a. Can the Committee and the member agree on a course of action that will resolve the situation?
  - b. If so, document that agreement and agree on a way forward.
  - c. If not, is it necessary to move to more formal procedures?