Clinical guidelines FAQ for nurses in community and primary care

This page answers common questions about the transition from NWT Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) to Indigenous Servies Canada (ISC) Clinical Care Pathways/Clinical Practice Guidelines (CCPs/CPGs) for Primary Care Nurses working in Remote and Isolated Indigenous Communities.

As ISC completes updates they are renaming their Clinical Practice Guidelines for Primary Community Care Nursing (CPG's). What is the different between a CPG, a Clinical Care Pathway (CCP), and an Emergency Care Pathway (e-CCP)?

ISC is renaming its Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) to Clinical Care Pathways (CCPs) and Emergency Clinical Care Pathways (e-CCPs) to better reflect their intended purpose and methodology. The scope and intent remain the same.

The New CCPs and e-CCPs follow the same structure as the CPGs. They outline key elements of clinical care and support nurses during an encounter, including:

- Health assessment
- Diagnostics
- Management
- Monitoring
- Education

Will I still have access to the NWT CPGs?

No. The NWT CPGs will be retired on **November 17th, 2025,** and will be removed from the DHSS website. They require extensive updates and should no longer be used. Any downloaded or printed versions must be discarded.

Starting November 17th, 2025, nurses will use the ISC Clinical Practice Guidelines for Nurses in Primary Care through the OneHealth portal.

How do I access the ISC Guidelines?

The ISC guidelines are hosted on a password-protected portal called OneHealth. Instructions on how to access the portal including the username and password will be provided on November 17th.

What is the scope of the ISC CPGs? Do they trump other NWT resources?

When used in the NWT, the ISC guidelines are recommended pathways of care based on best practices and evidence available at the time they were written **– they are not authoritative clinical guidelines OR policy documents and should under no circumstances be used as a substitute for clinical judgment or for consultation with other health care professionals.** More information explaining the scope can be found in the CPG chapter *Introduction: New Clinical Care Pathways (CCPs) / Emergency Clinical Care Pathways (e-CCPs).*

ISC guidelines are approved clinical resources but are superseded by NWT-specific legislation, policies and clinical guidelines.

How do I use the ISC guidelines?

Nurses use the ISC CPG's to assist in the identification of a health problem or condition and for the management of illness and other health issues in a primary care setting. Nurses may also use the CPGs for reference and education purposes.

The guidelines **do not delineate the legal, individual scope of practice of nurses.** In the NWT, nursing practice requires the nurse to reflect and make decisions about their individual scope of practice first critically. RNANTNU's Framework for Decision Making: Individual Scope of Practice, guides nurses through the decision-making process required prior to proceeding with any nursing practice.

Appropriate medical advice must be obtained when the client's condition is beyond the scope of practice and expertise of the nurse to manage autonomously.

The NWT CPGs are one factor to be considered when making decisions regarding a nurse's individual scope of practice. The influence of the following factors must also be considered when making decisions about the scope and boundaries of nursing practice. Some examples have been provided below; however, nurses in the NWT are expected, as a Standard of Practice, to be familiar with and to practice in accordance with all relevant legislation, standards, regulatory requirements, and employer policies.

- Health Professions or Nursing Legislation
    - o Nursing Professions Act
    - o Health Information Act
- RN Professional Regulation
    - o Scope of Practice
    - o Code of Ethics
- Professional Guidelines, Standards and Positional Statements
    - o Documentation Guidelines

- o Standards of Practice
- o Position Statement - Cultural Safety
- o Department of Health and Social Services (Department) Standards, Policies and Guidelines
- Employer Policies
  - o Regional/employer/organizational policies, procedures, protocols, and guidelines
  - o Health Facility Formulary*
- Individual RN Competence
  - o Framework for Decision Making: Individual Scope of Practice
  - o Independent research
  - o Clinical judgement
- Client Needs
  - o Social Determinants of Health

* Prior to dispensing or the administration of any drug, the nurse must check against their health facility formulary and must ensure that all the requirements outlined in the applicable legislation, regulations, bylaws, standards, policies and protocols have been met.