

CODE OF ETHICS CONSULTATION

Background Information

1. INTRODUCTION

A Code of Ethics (CoE) serves multiple purposes. It is core to the existence of any profession and is an authoritative source for guiding ethical behaviour. The current CoE was originally approved in 2014, making it more than ten years old and now due for replacement. The proposed new CoE was informed by a comprehensive **needs assessment** that set out direction to achieve optimal utility, uptake, durability and flexibility.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AIMS

The CoE Needs Assessment set out to determine:

- Local needs within Newfoundland and Labrador relating to ethical professional practice.
- Leading Canadian and international thinking and evidence on ethics and its expression within a CoE.

3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Using accepted practices in policy research, global and local evidence around ethics and CoE expression was collected from the following sources:

- **Grey literature:** Europe (particularly English-speaking jurisdictions), Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were targeted as these international jurisdictions have socio-cultural-economic similarities with Canada. CPNL's *Pharmacy Act, 2024*, *Pharmacy Regulations, 2024* and other regulatory guidance related to ethics were included in this category.
- **Peer reviewed research:** two databases, JSTOR and PUBMED were searched.
- **Lay press:** Newfoundland and Labrador journalism related to ethical issues in pharmacy.
- **Local NL Interests Survey:** pharmacy professionals (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians), regulatory leadership, and educators/researchers.

4. RESULTS

One hundred and two textual documents were included in the analysis along with survey responses from 65 Newfoundland and Labrador-registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and transcripts from seven interviews with NL academic pharmacy profession educators/researchers.

Ten themes emerged that encompassed 60 detailed recommendations for content, style and organisation of the new Code of Ethics. These fed into five major goals for the new CoE. Table 1 (below) contains major goals and themes for the new CoE.

THEME 1	A CoE is a basic criterion for designating an occupation as a profession	GOAL 1	Provide the basis for CoE existence and significance
THEME 2	Trust is integral to the positive feedback loop involving ethical practice, effective and sustained therapeutic patient-professional relationships and professional autonomy		
THEME 3	Subjective human qualities and values have significant influence on how ethics are applied in professional practice	GOAL 2	Key interest-holders perceive the Code to be relevant, valuable, and sensitive to professionals as humans operating in complex conditions
THEME 4	Workplace is an ethical influence		
THEME 5	Inclusion of ethical issues that are unique to pharmacy, frequently encountered in modern practice or present significant challenge/risk may provide a desired specificity		
THEME 6	Professional autonomy: Desirable vs. undesirable limits	GOAL 3	Support critical thinking, ethical competence and professional judgement in ethical decision-making. Avoid rules.
THEME 7	Ethical passivity encountered in pharmacy		

THEME 8	Nuanced approach to guidance around patient autonomy	GOAL 4	Facilitate skillful application of bioethical principles in contexts of current and future routine/typical practice and practice in crises
THEME 9	Ethical competency development in professionals		
THEME 10	Expression of the CoE influences uptake, integration, retention and accessibility by users	GOAL 5	<p>Be a "first" resource for key interest-holders through design that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible (findable, readable and simple) • inclusive / welcoming • memorable • inspiring

5. MEETING CODE OF ETHICS GOALS

The proposed new CoE integrated 90% of the 60 recommendations made within the Needs Assessment. This high degree of adherence within the design, content and expression of the document is expected to contribute to achieving the five major goals.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Feedback on the proposed new CoE will be instrumental in producing a final CoE that supports pharmacy professionals in fulfilling their duties to the public. The final CoE (target publication Summer of 2026) will convey the ethical expectations of a profession and the public they serve. Implementation strategies aimed at professionals' orientation, understanding, integration and competence in using this new regulatory guidance will accompany its release.