



## Values and Ethics Policy and Guidelines

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I	Values and Ethics Policy	1
Section II	Guidelines	6
Section III	Appendices:	
	A – Department of Health and Wellness Corporate Values and Guiding Principles for Ethical Decision-Making	7

# NOVA SCOTIA PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM

## SECTION I

### VALUES AND ETHICS POLICY

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#### 1. Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to define the values that are important in the operation of the Program and to clearly articulate the standards of ethical conduct expected of the Board, Committee members and the Administrator in the carrying out of their respective responsibilities regarding the Program.

#### 2. Policy Statement

We define “values” as “principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable”.<sup>1</sup> They represent “how” the Directors, Administrator and its personnel, health care professionals, volunteers and other stakeholders are expected to deal with each other in the day-to-day operations of the Program. They are monitored through the establishment of complaint mechanisms and often incorporated into stakeholder satisfaction surveys and performance management systems for employees.

The term “ethics” is defined as: “the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation” or “a set of moral principles”.<sup>2</sup> Health care professionals make ethical decisions on a daily basis. Health organizations are developing increasingly sophisticated frameworks and support systems to guide and inform these clinical, research and organizational activities.

##### 2.1 Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for articulating the values that are important in the operation of the Program and for ensuring that these values are integrated into selection, orientation and performance management systems at all levels (e.g. Board, Committee members, Administrator, etc.). The Board is also responsible to ensure that a complaint mechanism exists to allow issues of concern regarding the organization’s adherence to the values to be brought forward and resolved.

The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and supports are in place to foster sound ethical decision-making. Guidance may be obtained from the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness’ Corporate Values and Guiding Principles for Ethical Decision-Making (Appendix A).

The Administrator is responsible for ensuring the values are “lived” in the administration of the Program and for correcting any issues that may arise from time to time. The Administrator is also responsible to bring forward to the Board any ethical issues that may not be addressed in a Board policy so that a direction can be established to guide future similar situations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Free Dictionary Online, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/values>, March 23, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <http://m-w.com/dictionary/ethics>, March 23, 2007.

## 2.2 Values

The core values and beliefs that guide how the Program will be carried out are:

- **Accountability** – Our Program will be easy to access and to understand; we will be open and transparent in our reporting to the Minister and our stakeholders; we will be accountable to fulfill our legislated mandate; and we will be accountable to the public for the decisions that we make.
- **Continuous Quality Improvement** – We will constantly strive for excellence and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to innovation, evaluation and developing a Program that is responsive to the needs of Nova Scotians.
- **Results-Focused Leadership** – With thoughtful planning and clear outcomes in mind, our Program will demonstrate decisive, proactive and collaborative leadership in relation to our mandate.
- **Trust** – We will foster trust in our organization by doing what we say we will do, being respectful of others and safeguarding the security of the data gathered and used by the Program.

## 2.3 Ethical Standards

Appointees to public agencies (in our case, whether the Directors, Committee members or the Administrator) are expected to meet high standards of ethical conduct which enhance and maintain public confidence in their organization. They must act to instill public confidence in their actions and decisions.

While acting as a Director, Committee member or Administrator of the Program, individuals are expected to abide by the following:

<i>Integrity</i>	Individuals are expected to act at all times in good faith and with honesty and due diligence, for the public interest.
<i>Avoid Conflicts of Interest</i>	Individuals must avoid any conflict that might impair or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of the Board or the Program. There must be no apprehension of bias, based on what a reasonable person might perceive.  See the Board's Conflict of Interest Policy for additional information.
<i>Fiduciary Duty</i>	Directors who have been selected to the Board as a representative of a stakeholder group or region owe the same duties and loyalty to the Board and the Program and when their duties conflict with the wishes of the stakeholder or constituent, their primary duty remains to act in the best interests of the Board and the Program.
<i>Participation and Preparation</i>	Individuals are expected to regularly attend meetings and to adequately prepare for the duties expected of them.

<i>Behaviour</i>	<p>The conduct and language of appointees must be free from any discrimination or harassment prohibited by human rights legislation.</p> <p>Individuals' conduct should reflect social standards of courtesy, respect and dignity.</p>
<i>Confidentiality</i>	<p>Individuals must not reveal or divulge confidential information received in the course of their duties.</p> <p>Confidential information must not be used for any purpose outside that of undertaking the work of the Board or Program.</p> <p>If in any doubt about what is considered confidential, individuals should seek guidance from the Board Chair (or Committee Chair, as the case may be).</p>
<i>Public Commentary</i>	<p>Individuals must comply with the communications policy established by the Board.</p> <p>Where no policy guidance exists, individuals must refer to the Board Chair for guidance before making public comment on the Board or the Program.</p>
<i>Private Gain</i>	<p>Work on behalf of the Board or Program should not result in any personal or private financial or other substantive gain. (Private gain does not include honouraria for service as a Director or fees paid pursuant to a service agreement.)</p>
<i>Duty to Inform</i>	<p>Individuals must inform the Board Chair (or Committee Chair, as the case may be) of any circumstance that may have a negative or harmful effect on their respective abilities to perform the duties expected of them.</p>
<i>Compliance</i>	<p>Individuals are expected to act at all times in full compliance with both the letter and the spirit of applicable laws.</p> <p>Individuals should not only fully comply with the law, but should also avoid any situation which could be perceived as improper or indicate a casual attitude towards compliance.</p>
<i>Entertainment, Gifts and Favours</i>	<p>Individuals and members of their immediate families should not accept entertainment, gifts or favours that create or appear to create a favoured position for doing business with the Board or the Program.</p> <p>Full and immediate disclosure to the Board Chair (or Committee Chair) of borderline cases will always be taken as good-faith compliance with these standards.</p>

References: General Conduct Principles for Public Appointees (British Columbia) and The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Directors of Public Sector Organizations (British Columbia)

### **3. Legislative Framework**

Not applicable.

### **4. Principles**

The following principles will guide the Board's oversight of values and ethics:

- (a) The Board and its Program should behave, and be perceived, as an ethical organization.
- (b) Integrity, honesty and trust are essential elements of the Program's success. Any Director, Committee member or Administrator who knows or suspects a breach of this policy has a responsibility to report it to the Board Chair.
- (c) To demonstrate determination and commitment, each Director, Committee member and all personnel assigned to the Program by the Administrator should review and declare compliance with this policy annually.

### **5. Definitions**

In this policy:

- (a) "Administrator" means the agency or person designated by the Minister to administer the Program, and for the purposes of this policy includes the Manager appointed by the Administrator or any other person employed by the Administrator.
- (b) "Committee member" – is an individual appointed by the Board to a Committee associated with the Program.
- (c) "Board" means the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Board established by the Prescription Monitoring Act.
- (d) "Director" means a director of the Board.
- (e) "Program" means the Prescription Monitoring Program established by the Board.

### **6. Scope**

This policy applies to: the Board,

- (a) Individual Directors,
- (b) Committee members, and
- (c) the Administrator.

**7. Accountability**

The Administrator and the Board Chair have responsibility for the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of this policy. They will report on compliance with this policy to the Board at least once per year.

**8. Challenging Compliance**

Anyone with a concern about whether or not the Administrator, the personnel assigned to the Program by the Administrator or individuals involved in Program committees have adhered to the values and ethics set out in the policy may submit a written complaint to the Manager, with a copy to the Board Chair. The Manager will investigate the complaint and, together with the Board Chair, will determine the appropriate corrective action or response to the complaint.

Where concerns relating to compliance with this policy involve Directors, a written complaint may be submitted directly to the Board Chair who will investigate the complaint and, together with the Vice-Chair (or the full Board depending upon the severity of the matter), will determine the appropriate corrective action or response to the complaint.

**9. Form of Declaration**

I acknowledge that I have read and considered this Values and Ethics Policy and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**NOVA SCOTIA PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM**

**SECTION II**

**GUIDELINES**

Not applicable.

# NOVA SCOTIA PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM

## SECTION III

### Appendix A – Nova Scotia Department of Health Corporate Values and Guiding Principles for Ethical Decision-Making

#### **Corporate Values**

##### ***Collaboration***

- To foster a team-based working environment
- To seek a wide range of opinions to inform decision-making

##### ***Integrity***

- To be open and honest
- To honour our commitments

##### ***Respect***

- To value the ideas of others
- To accept and value diversity

##### ***Decisiveness***

- To identify and communicate a preferred option in a timely manner

##### ***Innovation***

- To be creative
- To allow learning thus enabling the emergence of improved methods of service delivery

##### ***Leadership***

- To act in a manner that encourages others to adhere to corporate values of the ethical environment
- To provide “vision”

##### ***Accountability***

- To adhere to the obligation to report on defined expectations in a timely manner

### **Guiding Principles for Ethical Decision-Making**

- Balance greatest good for the greatest number with targeting high risk/disadvantaged populations.
- Equitable opportunities to achieve positive health status (outcomes) regardless of place of residence.
- Equitable quality of health services regardless of location (service may be different, but meets minimum standards).
- Evidence and research-based decision-making.
- Sustainable – plan for today's and tomorrow's needs.
- Broad perspective is considered – active community/stakeholder support is sought, decisions are not made in isolation – consider impacts across system, sectors, etc.
- Transparency – follow through on applying and communicating decision-making principles, processes and criteria.