NURSE PRACTITIONERS' ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

New Grad Toolkit

Applying, Interviewing, and Negotiating for Your First NP Job

Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario

NPAO is the only organization exclusively dedicated to advancing the NP profession.

NPAO.ORG

The purpose of the New Grad Toolkit is to assist new Nurse Practitioners (NP) navigate the process of applying, interviewing, and negotiating for their first NP job, improve the transition from student to NP, foster a positive experience for this transition; and provide a means of support.

This Toolkit is an updated version of the previous New Grad Toolkit (NPAO, 2015).

This Toolkit is a means of support only. It is a general guideline, thus will not apply to all employment opportunities.

NPAO does not accept any responsibility for individual work contracts or agreements. The information in this document is current at the time of publication.

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Updated: March 2021

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Professional Liability Protection (PLP) and Legal Assistance for NPs (LA4NPs)

PLP

PLP (Professional Liability Protection) is a legal requirement for many health care professionals, including NPs.

Professional liability protection (PLP) provides financial compensation for members of the public who have been harmed as a result of malpractice or negligence by a health professional. The minimum coverage required for NPs is $5 million per claim.

For further information about the requirements for PLP, see the CNO website at

https://www.cno.org/en/maintain-your-membership1/professional-liability-protection/

There are two types of liability protection:

Occurrence-Based and Claims-Made.

The difference between the two is important to note.

1. *Occurrence-based* covers claims for incidents that occur while the coverage is in place. It does not matter when the claim is filed. Even if you leave your job, retire, or no longer have PLP coverage, as long as you were covered by PLP at the time the incident occurred, the claim will be covered through PLP. This is the PLP provided to physicians through the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) and is considered the gold standard.

2. *Claims-made* covers claims for incidents if the claim is filed while the policy or protection is active, regardless of when the incident took place. The coverage is based on when the claim is filed, not when the incident occurred. So you must have PLP coverage on the day the claim is filed. If your liability protection is "claims-made" protection, you are legally required to obtain extended coverage (called "tail coverage") for a period of two years after the policy or protection ends. This is an additional cost and would be required if, for example, you retire or change jobs and are no longer covered by your PLP policy. The two year period must be covered as this is the length of time a patient has to file a claim for damages after a specific incident occurs.

You can acquire PLP in several ways:

1

Through Your Employer

As employees, most NPs will be covered by their employer's PLP and will meet the legal requirement. Ask a potential employer about access to PLP as an employee, and whether it's occurrence-based or claims-made, what the amount of coverage is, and if it will cover you for a period of time if you leave your position.

2

Purchased Through a Professional Association

a. The Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) offers occurrence based PLP similar to that which physicians carry through CMPA.
Access to legal advice for any questions arising from your practice is also included, as well as employment contract review and access to webinars on a variety of topics related to legal risks in nursing.

b. RNAO currently offers PLP through a private company as part of membership. You need to clarify if this is occurrence-based or claims-made.

3

Purchasing your own PLP through an insurance provider

(similar to purchasing home or car insurance)

Again, be informed of what you are purchasing, whether the policy is occurrence-based or claims-made, and If it includes access to legal advice for your practice.

NOTE: The Ministry of Health currently subsidizes PLP for physicians and midwives. Until 2015 they also subsidized occurrence-based PLP from CNPS, for NPs through RNAO and NPAO membership. Since 2015 the Ministry of Health stopped funding PLP through NPAO. We are currently in discussions with the new government and are hopeful the subsidy for occurrence-based PLP will be reinstated for NPAO members in the near future.

Legal Assistance for NPs

LA4NPs

LA4NPs (Legal Assistance for NPs) is a legal program which provides you with access to a lawyer for complaints to the College of Nurses of Ontario, wrongful dismissal, WSIB appeals, etc.

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This is not legally mandated and is an optional program.

You can purchase LA4NPs (it may be called something different by other organizations) through NPAO, RNAO, and CNPS.

As with any product you are purchasing, please ensure you are familiar with the coverage and terms of the policy.

Purchase LA4NPs Through NPAO

npao.org/product/la4nps-legal-assistance-for-nurse-practitioners-automatic-renewal

Applying for an OHIP Billing Number

NPs in Ontario do not bill the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) for services provided; however, an OHIP billing number is required when ordering laboratory tests and diagnostic imaging for the purpose of providing compensation to the facility which is performing the test on the NP's order.

You must apply for an OHIP Billing Number once you have received confirmation from the College of Nurses of Ontario that you are registered as a Nurse Practitioner in the Registered Nurse Extended Class.

You can find information on how to apply for the OHIP billing number at:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/publications/ohip/ohip_billing.aspx

Please note that when you change employers, you must notify the College of Nurses of Ontario and the Ministry of Health with your new employer contact information.

Curriculum Vitae Development

A CV is primarily used for academic and research positions.

In most cases, a resume will be sufficient for your first NP job application.

CV Versus Resume

A curriculum vitae (CV) is a documentation of all your experiences and accomplishments, with a focus on academic appointments and research.

A resume is generally a more concise and shorter document that highlights these in one to two pages and focuses on work experience.

Format:

The aim is to be *relevant*, *clear and concise!* Consider the person who is reviewing this will only have a few minutes to review your resume and determine if you are the right fit.

Aa

Use a simple and easy to follow format with a professional font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman).

There are many templates online that can be used for basic formatting and organization; ensure that you are consistent throughout.

Structure:

Start with a header that includes your full name and credentials

(highest earned academic degree followed by professional licensure, then certifications).

For example:
Jane Doe, MN, NP-PHC, CDE.

This is then followed by your professional contact information.

List all items under each header in reverse chronological order.

Only include the categories that are relevant to you. You can add on as you build your CV through the years.

**Don't forget:* It is best to update your CV/resume on an annual basis at minimum.

Headings to consider:

- Education
- Work experience
- Clinical experience
- Teaching experience
- Leadership/management experience
- Research
- Publications
- Presentations
- Professional memberships/ committees
- Certifications
- Awards/honors
- Continuing education
- Information technology skills
- Affiliations
- References

Cover Letter:

A cover letter is an opportunity to add your voice to your application and to introduce yourself to the Selection Committee. It is used by the Selection Committee when reviewing your resume.

*If the posting indicates a cover letter is not required, then do not submit one as it might not be read and indicates to the employer that you do not follow instruction well.

The Cover Letter Should:

1

Include Job Title and Posting Number

Include both the Job Title and Posting Number referenced in the job posting;

2

Experience & Education

Focus on how your experience and education make you an excellent candidate for the position;

3

Relevant Skills

Highlight relevant skills that you have that are listed in the job posting or description; use similar language from the job posting when highlighting how your experience fits with the job description;

4

Willingness Statements

Address willingness statements (such as being willing to travel);

5

Certifications

List certifications (such as a valid driver's license; nursing licenses) that relate to the qualifications of the position;

6

Relevant Additional Information

Include other relevant information (for example, contact information if you will be on vacation/on leave);

7

Short, Concise

Be short, concise a maximum of one page;

8

Make Edits

Avoid acronyms, or any errors in spelling or grammar.

9

Address the Committee

Be addressed to the Selection Committee.

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Interview Skills

1. Research :

Look up your potential employer's website and familiarize yourself with its content. Information about an employer can be found through a variety of sources (e.g. social media and the organization's website). An awareness of current events within an organization as well as its history can be beneficial during an interview. Some employers may ask detailed questions regarding their organization during an interview while others may not focus on this area.

It is also very helpful to know the particular accomplishments of the organization or department. You can take the opportunity to praise theirinnovativeness and express that these features drew you to the position and excited you about working there. The interview panel will appreciate both that you did your research and the acclaim.

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2. Preparation :

Prior to the scheduled interview, determine the location logistics.
Allow extra time to find the building or room and have money available for parking. Arrive early – aim for at least 15 minutes – and give yourself a few minutes to focus before the interview. In addition, bring water, paper, and a pen. You will appear unprepared by having to ask for these items.

Consider also bringing a folder/portfolio that includes your resume/CV, cover letter, and any other achievements you may want to share with the interviewers.
You can include your list of questions for the interviewers in this folder as well.

Take your appearance into account. Keep it professional, simple and understated. Business casual is best. Avoid big/excess jewellery, keep makeup to a minimum and neutral and ensure your appearance is neat.

3. Mock Interview :

Have a trusted friend or family member ask you questions about your resume and past work experience prior to the interview. According to TopResume (2019), practicing interview techniques ahead of time with someone will help a candidate feel more relaxed and prepared. This will help alleviate interview jitters and identify areas where you need to be more concise or alternatively, provide more detail. Employers are interested in your previous work experiences or how you handled difficult situations in the past. The examples you share can serve as an indicator of how you will problem solve in future situations. Your explanations can add context to your resume and demonstrate the value you could bring to the position.

Use the opportunity to practice efficiency in responding. The interview panel will not appreciate rambling or tangential explanations. The goal is to be specific, direct, and concise in your response. Some individuals benefit from more preparation whereas some prefer to "wing it." A moderate approach is ideal. It is best to not appear too rehearsed nor disorganized or unprepared. Do practice questions and get a general sense of how you want to respond

See Possible Interview Questions on pg. 12

4. Emphasize Your Best Characteristics :

Don't be afraid to talk about your best assets. Let them know why you are the best candidate for this position and why you will be a great person to work with. Even with little experience, a positive attitude and a willingness to learn could be just the qualities that this employer is looking for. If you have little or no Nurse Practitioner experience, draw on yourexperience from your clinical placements. How did patients respond to you? Did you have positive evaluations from your preceptors? Passion for the Nurse Practitioner profession is always appreciated.

5. Ask a Question :

Asking a question demonstrates attentiveness, engagement and interest. This may be what sets you apart from the other candidates. It is appropriate to ask about the expected timeline for whether you have been selected as the successful candidate or not for the position.

Some questions you may want to ask:

- What can the successful candidate expect in terms of the onboarding process/orientation?
- Who is your ideal candidate? What are you seeking in your ideal candidate?
- What is the biggest challenge facing your organization at this time (this ia good opportunity to respond with how you can assist if you are hired).
- When can I expect to hear back in regards to a candidate being chosen?

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Possible Interview Questions:

Mock Interview

Have a trusted friend or family member ask you questions about your resume and past work experience prior to the interview.

• Consider a time you had a conflict with a colleague/physician. What happened and how did you handle it? What was the end result?

• Discuss a time when you observed poor practice. How did you respond? What was the end result?

• Where do you see yourself in 5 years? (Speak to progressing within the team/organization if it's a permanent position, teaching, research etc.; if temporary, speak to gaining experience/knowledge and hopefully permanency in addition to contributing your skills/care/leadership in the time you are there etc.)

• Discuss a time when you disagreed with a colleague re: plan of care – how did you handle it? What would you do differently (if anything)?

• What are your relevant experiences thus far? Why do you think you're a good fit for the position? (Here is where you sell yourself, your clinical placements/job experiences, and your accomplishments.)

• What is the role of a nurse practitioner in the primary/acute/pediatric setting? (How would you explain your role to someone who is unfamiliar with it? What are the particular challenges and opportunities for the NP in this setting?)

• Discuss a time you made a mistake and what you learned from the experience. What is your greatest weakness?

• Discuss a time you dealt with competing demands.

• Why do you want to work here? Why do you want this position?

• Discuss a time when you experienced the benefits of working in an interdisciplinary team.

• What is your experience working on a team?

• What is your experience with Quality Improvement? With research? With teaching?

• Have you ever been involved in developing patient education materials?

• Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.

• Can you think of the last time you were asked to help out on a task that was not directly your responsibility?

• Tell me about a time when you were honest and forthcoming and it was difficult to do so.

• Tell me about a significant crisis you have faced and how you handled it.

• Tell me about a time when your knowledge or expertise was critical for you to solve a problem or to help you understand a situation.

• Describe a professional relationship you have established, and tell me about a situation where you have used it to deal with a work-related task or problem.

Negotiating When Interviewing for a NP Position

Since most NP positions are salaried, you will be an employee of an organization. In the primary care setting, this could be in a Community Health Centre (CHC), Family Health Team (FHT), Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic (NPLC), Aboriginal Health Access Centre (AHAC), or Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). Each of these organizations receives funding from the Ministry of Health for each employee position, including NP positions. As a result of strong advocacy in recent years from NPAO, the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) and the Alliance for Healthier Communities (AHC), the primary care sector has seen compensation increases for NPs, as well as for other health professionals in these team-based models. However, each employer has full discretion as to whether or not they will utilize the full compensation funding for each position. During the interview, ask if the organization has a salary grid which they utilize, or if they negotiate with each employee individually. As new graduates, you will likely not be offered the maximum salary to start, but you can negotiate up, as well as for other benefits, such as employer paid occurrence-based PLP.

If the organization is unionized, your salary and benefits will be determined by the union contract. You will not be able to opt out of the union if the position you are applying for is unionized.

Regardless of the practice setting, ask how the funding model affects the utilization of the NP role. For example, in some FHTs, the NP role is restricted to specific patients or tasks due to the compensation structure for the physicians (incentive bonuses, rostering bonuses, out-of-basket billing, etc). In a hospital setting, ask about the NP MRP role and if the NPs admit/treat/discharge or if the role is restricted in other ways.

If you are considering working with a physician who is in private practice, ask how the physician will pay you. Physicians are not legally able to bill for work they did not perform (with a few exceptions related to bonuses, etc), and they cannot bill for "supervising" an NP (since NPs do not require supervision). The physician must pay out of pocket for the NP salary, though they may recoup some of this by rostering more patients and qualifying for more incentive bonuses through shadow billing (shadow billing is a form of OHIP billing that does not involve financial payment and is used for data collection and administrative purposes). If you work with a physician who is found to be billing fraudulently to pay your salary, you may be disciplined by the College of Nurses (this has occurred in other provinces). More information can be found in the OHIP bulletin - http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4724.pdf as well as on the CNPS website at https://cnps.ca/np-billing.

NPAO has a NoviceNP/Student Community of Practice, and an Independent Practice Toolkit, which you may find helpful as you begin your NP journey. The NPAO Members Only Facebook group also provides great resources and a place to connect with your colleagues.

Consider the following when preparing to negotiate:

- Determine if the position is part-time or full-time, salaried or is a per-hour, per day or per-patient contract.
  - Are you expected to be on call? If so, how will you be compensated for the additional hours?
- Benefits: If you are salaried, certain benefits should be negotiated in addition to your salary. They include:
  - Health Insurance
  - Vacation (at least three to four weeks per year)
  - Sick leave (generally two weeks or one day per month, per year) Travel allowance, if you are expected to make house calls
  - Continuing education (CE) allowance and leave. One to two conferences per year is appropriate; be sure to include enough in this allowance to allow for airfare, room and food for at least one national conference. An allowance of $1,500 to $2,500 for this purpose is not unreasonable.
  - PLP and LA4NPs
  - Membership in professional organization(s) such as NPAO
  - Office subscription to appropriate NP journal
- Practice expectations:
  - Determine if you will be able to practice to the full extent of your scope
  - Determine the employer's policy and processes for situations where you are outside your scope of practice or beyond your level of knowledge, skill, and judgement with a patient.
  - Are you expected to be on call? If so, how will this be reimbursed and what backup do you have?

Building Your Portfolio

A portfolio is a way of showcasing competence and ongoing education. It can be formatted to either show reflective practice aligned to core competencies and standards as evidence of competencies met (spinal column format), or a reflective narrative showing a more personal journey of learning.

Developing a professional nursing portfolio is one way to preserve your education, clinical, and professional accomplishments. While your curriculum vitae/resume contains information about your demographics, education and positions held, your portfolio differs in that it provides evidence of the competencies and expertise developed as a result of your experiences.

The College of Nurses of Ontario has outlined Nurse Practitioner core competencies (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2018) and practice standards (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2019), however these are aimed at entry level NP's and a portfolio builds on the skills outlined in these documents.

A portfolio helps guide learning in response to changes in nursing practice due to experience; it helps foster critical thinking skills as well as helps keep the NP accountable. A portfolio can be used as an assessment tool to help focus learning opportunities, while also showcasing your knowledge and skill set; it also helps give direction to your journey as a lifelong learner. A portfolio is based on the principles of adult learning and in-depth learning.
Your portfolio can be a hard copy or an electronic copy. The important thing is to collect early and keep it organized and up-to-date.

What to include in your portfolio:

1. Your personal philosophy of nursing

2. Your immunization history

3. Objective documentation such as certificates, letters of appreciation, diplomas, copies of protocols etc. that you have developed

4. Copies of your transcripts from each college and university you have attended 5. Copies of certificates of continuing education

6. A copy of your job description (update this if your job description changes) 7. A copy of your annual learning plan and evaluations

8. A list of nurses you have preceptored or mentored – be specific as to how you have aided their professional development

9. A summary of patient cases where you have played a significant role – ensure no identifying data is included and that patient confidentiality is maintained 10. Supporting documents such as:

- *In-service attendance
- *Awards
- *Annual Performance Appraisals
- *Dates of Promotions
- *Letters of Recommendation from current or previous employers

11. A copy of all professional presentations and all related documentation including handouts, evaluations, etc.

12. Copies of articles you have published with complete citation

13. A copy of all poster presentations and abstracts

14. A list of all memberships to professional organizations

15. Write an annual self-assessment of your career goals and achievements and plan for 5 years – update this every year and develop additional plans to achieve the 5-year goal

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Ongoing Professional Development

1. Perform a Self Assessment: The College of Nurses of Ontario requires each of us to participate in annual Quality Assurance review. Understanding your own strengths and weaknesses takes a considerable degree of honesty, reflection and acceptance. By listing at least three specific areas of your practice that require improvement, you can begin to analyze where you may need to focus your energy to get the maximum impact out of your learning endeavors. First start by determining your learning needs. If you require more direction visit the CNO website. Please note as NPs we are required to complete a self assessment annually as part of the QA Program and records should be stored for up to two years. (CNO, 2019a.)

2. Setting SMART goals: Setting learning goals should not stop after graduating or obtaining your NP certification. Rather the process can be implemented throughout your career to keep you moving forward in your learning trajectory. SMART goals can keep you focused and assured that your goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (Laylor & Hornyak, 2012, CNO, 2019b). For more information on creating SMART goals visit the CNO website.

3. Create a Learning Plan: Using the goals that you have set for yourself can lay the foundation for learning plan and future development. Keep track of your achievements and the areas which need improvement. Using templates can provide structure and be helpful in creating your learning plan more structured. The learning plan can also be used as a record keeping tool for professional activities, reflections and progress, which are annual requirements for the College of Nurses of Ontario.

4. Attend conferences and courses: Keeping yourself up to date on new knowledge and professional innovations can become a time consuming endeavor. However there are ways to make this process fun and easy. Keeping connected with the latest news in your field of study can be easily facilitated by joining special interest groups. Attending organized events can also be a good way to meet like minded professionals and peers who can help drive your career development to the next level.

5. Seek out mentorship/advisors: Building relationships with mentors/advisors for guidance is invaluable to your ongoing professional development. Mentors usually have practical experience that formal education or institutional learning may not be able to provide. Mentors are leaders looked to for guidance because they have paved the way for others in practice. A good mentor will provide the mentee with guidance, information and relevant contacts to help elevate their career (The Career Foundation, 2019). The mentors you choose should be suited to your learning style and learning needs at the time. It is also common to have multiple persons acting as mentors/advisors for different practice areas or roles.

6. Evaluating your progress: After you have achieved your goals or passed an expected timeframe, ask yourself specific questions to assess your progress. The CNO has resources to assist in developing and evaluating your learning goals (CNO, 2021). Collecting evaluations from leadership and colleagues is valuable for an accurate assessment of your performance and growth.

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Nurse Practitioner Role Advocating

Why Advocate:

Nurse Practitioners have both clinical expertise and education to advocate for legislation pertaining to health care, and as nurse leaders, are honour bound to become involved in health policy. Involvement can be as simple as quality improvement projects or as complex as getting involved at the federal level.

An effective way of advocating for patients and the NP profession is to become involved in policy development. When individuals come together and collaborate, change is possible, and working with a professional organization such as NPAO allows for individual voices to be heard and for change to occur.

NPs are encouraged to engage with NPAO as this contributes to the accountability and voice of the profession to the public, as well as policy makers, health care administrators, and other health care professionals on specific issues. NPAO is also able to communicate effectively with its members via social media, electronic communication, newsletters, bulletin alerts, etc. to keep members aware of current issues and engaged in solutions for change.

NPAO has several toolkits which may be helpful, such as the NP Week Toolkit and Speaking to the Media, which you can find in the resource section of the NPAO website.

At The Local Level:

Raise awareness with community leaders about the advanced education and increased skill level of NPs, which makes them a cornerstone of cost-effective, high-quality health care.

Ask organizations and consumer groups for support - writing letters of support to legislators is particularly useful.

Get involved with community board and advisory panels in both government and private sectors, as well as school boards and parent advisory committees.

Invite elected officials to your practice site, this allows officials to see the high quality care NP's offer and the barriers they face in providing care. NPAO usually hosts an annual Take Your MPP To Work Day for this purpose.

Know the players and if they are supportive of the NP role in healthcare. Go to meetings, ask questions, have personal conversations.

At The Federal Level:

When getting involved at the federal level, writing letters, sharing personal stories of patients affected by legislation, may help make issues more real and pertinent for legislators.

Points to include are economic impact of disease or treatment, how people are affected by current legislation, which professional organizations you are a part of, and suggestions on how to improve the situation. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada (NPAC) offer additional resources for advocating at the federal level.

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