



2020 Pandemic Plan

In response to the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Nova Scotia College of Respiratory Therapists (NSCRT) has reviewed and updated our pandemic readiness plan. This document will be updated, as required, in order to respond to this evolving situation.

Respiratory Therapists have a critical role to play in the management of COVID-19 patients. The NSCRT is monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak closely. We are committed to fulfilling our public protection mandate and continue to promote excellence and leadership in cardio-respiratory care.

NSCRT Priorities

1. As the need arises, implement our policy criteria for temporary registration of out of province Respiratory Therapists and retired Respiratory Therapists to allow them to return to active practice.
2. Liaison with government officials, employers, the Regulated Health Professions Network and the National Alliance of Respiratory Therapy Regulatory Bodies to maintain up to date information on Coronavirus.
3. Collaborate and communicate with employers to determine the appropriate number of RTs required to provide the anticipated respiratory care services.
4. Ensure members are provided with available, up to date resources including information related to their professional responsibilities during a pandemic.
5. Provide members with information on their professional responsibilities and all other relevant information as received by the NSCRT.
6. Address questions and respond to concerns from Respiratory Therapists in the province.

Communication Plan

The official spokesperson for the NSCRT is the President. Any statements from the NSCRT will be from the President or their delegate.

Communication to members will occur on an ongoing basis, as necessary, to support healthcare operations and effective utilization of RTs.

Communication tools that will be employed include direct email to members, updated information posted to the NSCRT website and Twitter updates.

Operational Emergency Team

The NSCRT Board of Directors governs the College and the day to day operational and regulatory duties are delegated to the Registrar and Deputy Registrar. During a potential health crisis, it is imperative that the College provides timely responses to emerging issues. Therefore, the NSCRT Board of Directors have identified the Executive Committee to form an Operational Emergency Team (OET) and has vested authority in this team to execute the NSCRT emergency response.

The NSCRT Executive, including the President, Past President, Treasurer and the staff, form the Operational Emergency Team.

President:

The President will maintain contact with operational staff and receive regular updates on regulatory responses. Formal communication to members and information posted on the website will be approved by the President.

Past President:

The Past President will perform duties as assigned by the President and in the event the President is incapacitated, will assume the duties and authority of the President.

Treasurer:

The Treasurer is granted the authority and responsibility to oversee the financial operations of the College and may approve required spending that is outside of the current budget as needed for the emergency response.

Registrar:

The Registrar will formulate and distribute communication approved by the President. The Registrar has the authority to grant and extend temporary licenses, up to a maximum of one year, according to NSCRT policies related to the emergency response.

All regulatory duties continue to be performed by the Registrar or delegated by the Registrar to appropriate individuals as required. (e.g. the Deputy Registrar or a statutory committee chair).

Deputy Registrar:

The Deputy Registrar will perform duties as assigned by the Registrar and in the event the Registrar is incapacitated, will assume the duties and authority of the Registrar.

Under the direction of the Treasurer, the Deputy Registrar performs all financial operations related to the emergency response.

Respiratory Therapists Duty to Provide Care

Respiratory Therapists provide vital acute, critical, emergency and home care to patients.

During a health emergency, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, Respiratory Therapists face a disproportionate risk of exposure to the virus as they provide care for infected patients. Respiratory Therapists have a professional responsibility to provide appropriate care to infected patients while adhering to established guidelines and protocols to minimize the risk of transmission.

During an emergency response, Respiratory Therapists are expected to adhere to the following:

- a) Work within their legislated scope of practice, the employer's scope of employment, and their individual scope of competence.

- b) Inform their employer of competency limits if they are called upon to practice in areas where the required skills are beyond their scope of competence.
- c) Operational needs may require Respiratory Therapists to be re-assigned to areas of practice outside of their current scope of competence. Upon re-assignment, Respiratory Therapists must identify their competency limits and collaborate with the employer to update and acquire the necessary skills.
- d) Ensure all guidelines and protocols are adhered to so as to reduce their risk of exposure when providing patient care.
- e) Personal situations may be complicated by circumstances precipitated by the virus. A Respiratory Therapist or a family member may become symptomatic or infected, or they may have child/elder care responsibilities. Respiratory Therapists who may be infected must inform their employer immediately that they are unavailable for work and are in self-isolation for the defined time period as per governmental/organizational recommendations. Respiratory Therapists with child or elder care issues should inform their employer immediately that they have home responsibilities that currently prevent them from working. They should make reasonable efforts to source alternate care arrangements if possible.
- f) Ensure responsible use of social media. Respiratory Therapists should be supportive of the federal and provincial health messaging the public is receiving. Communications must be transparent, objective, accurate and evidence based. Personal opinions may be interpreted as professional comments by the viewing audience. Respiratory Therapists must not use social media platforms to post about or comment on anything heard or seen about any patient, patient family member(s), or circumstance.
- g) Routinely check the NSCRT website to obtain current information related to COVID-19.

Appendix

NSCRT Policy Temporary Registration of Canadian out-of-province Respiratory Therapists To Assist in Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency situation, the NSCRT has a mechanism for temporary registration of Canadian out-of-province Respiratory Therapists (RTs) who are willing to assist with the emergency or health crisis in Nova Scotia.

Canadian out-of-province RTs may be registered in Nova Scotia provided they meet the following criteria for registration:

- a) Are fluent in written and spoken English.
- b) If practicing in a regulated jurisdiction:
 - i. Hold an active practicing license in good standing issued by a Canadian Respiratory regulatory body outside of Nova Scotia and verified through the provision of a completed Registration Verification Form.
- c) If practicing in an unregulated jurisdiction:
 - i. Is a registered member of the CSRT (does not apply to associate, honorary or student membership); and
 - ii. provide a letter of reference from their last or current employer(s) in a form prescribed by the signatories.

The NSCRT Board of Directors authorizes the Registrar to issue a temporary license and to waive the application and registration fees for 60 days for a Canadian RT applicant who is applying for an active-practicing license for the purpose of assisting with a declared emergency situation or health crisis in Nova Scotia where there are critical staff shortages in a Health Authority or a private company. Should the situation extend beyond 60 days the Registrar is authorized to extend the temporary license as dictated by the emergency response needs, not exceeding a total of one year. Should the temporary member wish to remain licensed in Nova Scotia beyond the crisis, the Registrar will require the applicant to meet the legislated registration requirements including payment of the applicable registration fee.

NSCRT Policy
Temporary Registration of Retired Respiratory Therapists
Applying to Assist in Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency situation, the NSCRT has a mechanism for temporary registration of retired Respiratory Therapists (RTs) who are willing to assist with an emergency or health crisis in Nova Scotia.

Retired Respiratory Therapists may be registered in Nova Scotia provided they meet the following criteria for registration:

- a) The applicant was a member in good standing at the time of retirement; and
- b) The applicant has held a license to practice and was in active clinical practice within the past 5 years.

The NSCRT Board of Directors authorizes the Registrar to issue a temporary license and to waive the application and registration fees for 60 days for a retired RT applicant who is applying for an active-practicing license for the purpose of assisting with a declared emergency situation or health crisis in Nova Scotia where there are critical staff shortages in a Health Authority or a private company. Should the situation extend beyond 60 days the Registrar is authorized to extend the temporary license as dictated by the emergency response needs, not exceeding a total of one year.

Applicants who do not meet the above criteria may be considered for a temporary license with conditions or restrictions under the following criteria:

- a) The employer has identified a restricted role within the institution under which the RT can practice;
- b) The applicant demonstrates to the employer they possess the competencies to fulfill the defined role; and
- c) The applicant and employer agree to upgrade any identified required specific skills and will provide evidence to the College that the acquisition of these identified skills can be provided for within the institution.

Should the temporary member wish to remain licensed in Nova Scotia beyond the crisis, the Registrar will require the applicant to meet the legislated registration requirements including payment of the applicable registration fee.

NSCRT Policy
Temporary Registration of Respiratory Therapy Students
to Assist in Emergency Situations

To assist with an emergency health crisis in Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia College of Respiratory Therapists (NSCRT) has developed a procedure for granting respiratory therapy student applicants a temporary license. The NSCRT has a responsibility to ensure safe, ethical and competent care is provided to Nova Scotians. To mitigate risk to the public, all licenses issued to respiratory therapy students will be temporary with applicable conditions and restrictions.

1. The NSCRT Credentials Committee authorizes the Registrar to issue temporary licenses with conditions and restrictions and to waive the application and registration fee for students who meet the specified criteria.
2. These temporary licenses will expire after 60 days or immediately upon the emergency health crisis being declared over, whichever occurs first.
3. If the emergency health crisis extends beyond 60 days, the Registrar has the authority to renew the temporary license for an additional timeframe (not to exceed 12 months total).
4. The professional designation for legal documentation purposes is “Student Respiratory Therapist-Temporary License” or “SRT-TL”.
5. Applicants for the SRT-TL must submit the following:
 - a. Completed online application in the temporary pandemic support category;
 - b. Verification of identity (Copy of Birth certificate or passport);
 - c. Proof of completion of the NSCRT online eLearning module.
 - d. Summary of NCF competencies where entry to practice competency has been achieved and those competencies in progress. Entry to practice competency in NCF B7.1 and B7.2: Proper use of preventative measures to ensure health and safety must have been achieved;
 - e. Official letter from Dalhousie University Respiratory Therapy Program stating that the applicant:
 - i. Is in their 3rd year of the program;
 - ii. Has completed mask fit testing; and
 - iii. Has a negative criminal records and vulnerable sector check previously submitted to NSHA for the applicant’s recent clinical.

6. The temporary licenses for students will be subject to the following conditions and restrictions:

Conditions:

- a. Following expiry of the temporary license, upon successful completion of the remaining educational program requirements, students may apply for a temporary graduate license.
- b. Following successful completion of the educational program, individuals will be eligible to challenge the credentialing examination, administered by the Canadian Board for Respiratory Care (CBRC).

Restrictions:

- a. Must practice under the general supervision of a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) who has no conditions or restrictions on their license.
 - b. Is prohibited from delegating any act of respiratory therapy to another person who does not hold an active practice Respiratory Therapy license.
 - c. Is prohibited from supervising or mentoring learners.
 - d. Is authorized to perform only the NCF competencies the student has demonstrated entry to practice competency in, as determined by the faculty. Competency may have been demonstrated through simulation or in a clinical setting.
 - e. All SRT-TLs are prohibited from providing **any patient care**:
 - i. In Intensive Care Units;
 - ii. To COVID-19 positive patients.
 - f. All SRT-TLs are prohibited from providing **direct patient care**, but may assist active practice RRTs, in the following areas:
 - i. Emergency Departments; and
 - ii. Obstetrics/Neonatal/Ped areas.
7. In response to the crisis, existing license restrictions may be amended, or additional restrictions imposed as deemed necessary by the Credentials Committee.