

# CLIENT<sup>1</sup> ABANDONMENT – Position Statement

*The legislated mandate of the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practice Nurses is to protect the public through the regulation of Licensed Practical Nurses.*

*Position Statements provide the collective opinion of the SALPN relating to practice issues, which may not be covered by a regulation or policy. Position Statements are often developed in response to members' questions and provide a framework within which practice decisions can be made. Members whose practice is not consistent with the position outlined by the SALPN may be required to justify their conduct or actions. (CMTO, 2021)*

## Introduction

LPNs have a professional and legal obligation to provide their clients with safe, competent, and ethical care. LPNs do not allow their judgments about a client, or the client's lifestyle, to compromise the client's care by withdrawing or refusing to provide care. An LPN may withdraw from care provision or refuse to provide care if they believe that providing care would place them or their clients at an unacceptable level of risk. LPNs must consider relevant factors, including:

- the specific circumstances of the situation
- their legal and professional obligations; and
- their contractual obligations

## What is Client Abandonment?

Abandonment occurs when the LPN has engaged with the client or has accepted an assignment and then discontinues care without:

- negotiating a mutually acceptable withdrawal of service with the client; or
- arranging for suitable alternative or replacement services; or
- allowing the employer, a reasonable opportunity to provide for alternative or replacement services.

Other examples of client abandonment could include:

- Leaving abruptly without giving the employer adequate notice for replacing the LPN

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, the term client(s) refers to client, patient, or resident.

- Leaving without reporting to the oncoming shift
- Being unavailable to other providers or not providing care yourself because you are distracted by personal activities

## What is not Client Abandonment?

Situations that are not likely to be considered abandonment can include: (all from BCCNM, 2021)

- Refusing to work extra hours or shifts beyond the posted work schedule when you've given proper notice
- Refusing to accept an assignment when you've given reasonable notice to the appropriate person that you aren't competent to carry out the assignment
- Resigning from employment without giving notice
- Refusing to float to an unfamiliar practice area without preparation or orientation and an appropriately modified assignment

The documents in the reference section provide greater detail on abandonment and what the LPN is expected to do when faced with these situations.

## References:

- Association of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurses (ANBLPN). (2019). *Abandonment of Care*. [https://www.anblpn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Abandonment\\_of\\_Care\\_2019.pdf](https://www.anblpn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Abandonment_of_Care_2019.pdf)
- British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM). (2021). [https://www.bccnm.ca/RN/learning/dutytoprovidecare/Pages/client\\_abandonment.aspx](https://www.bccnm.ca/RN/learning/dutytoprovidecare/Pages/client_abandonment.aspx)
- College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO). (2021). *Position Statement*. <https://www.cmta.com/position-statement/>
- College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO). (2017). *Refusing Assignments and Discontinuing Nursing Services*. [https://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41070\\_refusing.pdf](https://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/41070_refusing.pdf)