



## Consultation with NSRP

### A Guide for Registrants

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This document explains how registrants can consult with NSRP, what NSRP is and is not positioned to provide, and how to make best use of the broader range of consultation resources available. The decision for action remains with you, the registrant.

## Where to Start

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When you have an ethical or regulatory question, the first place to look is the regulatory framework itself. Many questions can be answered directly from:

- The NSRP *Standards of Practice* (which includes the Standards of Professional Conduct, the Standards for Providers of Psychological Services, and a listing of relevant standards, legislation, and guidelines).
- The *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*.
- The *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*, the *Psychology Regulations*, and the *NSRP Bylaws*.
- NSRP guidance documents, including *Considerations for Psychologists when Disclosing Confidential Personal Information* and others available in the Standards and Guidelines section of the NSRP website.
- The NSRP *Aggregate Summary of Complaint Issues*, which highlights areas of concern from past complaint matters and can prompt reflection on relevant standards. The summaries are not precedents or guidelines, but they can help identify patterns worth considering when thinking through a question.

The Code of Ethics also provides a structured ethical decision-making model. Code Standard III.38 directs registrants to “seek consultation from colleagues and/or where appropriate groups and committees, and give due regard to their advice in arriving at a responsible decision, if faced with difficult situations.”

Working through the framework yourself, before reaching out to others, is part of the practice of self-regulation — and it is the part that most often resolves the question.

## What NSRP Can and Cannot Provide

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NSRP communicates with registrants to provide regulatory information and guidance. Registrants are welcome to contact NSRP for professional guidance related to regulatory matters.

### What NSRP can provide

- Regulatory information.
- Direction to the applicable framework — the standards, the Code, the relevant legislation, and NSRP guidance documents.
- Identification of which standards and provisions apply to a question.
- Pointers to other resources that can assist.

### What NSRP cannot provide

- Specific practice advice or ethical decision-making on the registrant's behalf.
- Legal opinions.
- Authorization or pre-approval of a particular course of action.

This division is not a limitation of the regulator's helpfulness. It reflects the structure of self-regulation, where individual ethical judgment rests with the registrant, and the regulator's role is to ensure that judgment is informed by the framework that applies. As psychology is a self-regulated profession, the decision for action remains with the registrant.

## Why Consultation Matters

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Professional isolation is one of the conditions in which registrants are most likely to encounter difficulty. Consulting regularly — with peers, with APNS, with supervisors, with NSRP, and with legal counsel where appropriate — is not just a procedural recommendation; it is a protective practice. Registrants who consult routinely tend to identify difficulties earlier, think through them more rigorously, and respond more effectively. The Code of Ethics frames consultation as protective for this reason.

The value of consultation cannot be overstated. The Code describes its benefits: enhancing skills, augmenting knowledge, modifying perspective, rectifying biases — and ultimately improving the quality of services provided. Registrants are encouraged to build consultation into their regular practice rather than reserving it for moments of crisis.

## Other Resources, and What Each Is Best Suited For

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NSRP is one resource among several. Most hard cases benefit from drawing on more than one. The resources serve different purposes, and registrants are encouraged to recognize which resource is best suited to which kind of question.

**The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS)** — for substantive ethical reasoning, comparable case experience, and peer consultation. APNS maintains a list of psychologists who are open to speaking with colleagues. Code Standard III.38 specifically directs registrants to peer consultation.

**Colleagues and other regulated psychologists** — for the kind of substantive engagement another practitioner can offer: thinking through reasoning, sharing comparable cases, naming patterns, and offering judgment grounded in clinical and professional experience.

**Legal counsel** — through your insurer or independent counsel — for legal exposure questions, statutory interpretation, and matters where how you act may affect your own legal position. The regulator can identify what a statute permits or requires; whether acting in a particular way creates legal risk is a legal question that warrants legal counsel.

**Supervisors and mentors** — for the developmental and accountability layer of professional practice. Candidate Psychologists on the Conditional Register should always consult their supervisor on ethical questions arising in their practice. Registered Psychologists may also draw on formal clinical supervisors, professional mentors, or consultation supervisors engaged for specific areas of work. These standing relationships often provide a richer form of consultation than ad-hoc contact because the supervisor or mentor knows the registrant's practice over time.

**Clinical consultation** — for the clinical judgment layer that often sits underneath a regulatory or ethical question. Some questions present as ethical but are partly or substantially clinical, and the right consultation pathway may be peer clinical consultation rather than the regulator.

These resources are complementary. A registrant working through a complex situation using only NSRP is under-resourced; using only peers is under-resourced differently; avoiding legal counsel because a matter “feels ethical, not legal” is under-resourced again. Drawing on multiple resources is part of competent practice.

### A note on building collegial networks

Many registrants build their collegial networks gradually over the course of their careers. Registrants who are early in practice, working in geographically isolated settings, or transitioning to a new area of work may have fewer established consultation relationships. Reaching out to APNS, contacting former supervisors, or engaging with peer consultation groups are all normal ways of building these connections over time.

The office has observed, through inquiries and complaints, that some registrants navigating difficult professional questions could have benefited from a stronger collegial network — not because they

did anything wrong, but because the absence of trusted colleagues to think with can leave registrants more exposed when complex situations arise. Building these connections is a normal part of professional development, and the resources above are starting points rather than endpoints.

## Preparing Your Question

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It is best to put your initial question in writing before contacting NSRP. Working through the question in writing often clarifies it — and a well-prepared question receives a more useful response.

When preparing your question, the following prompts may help:

### About the situation

- Who are the primary and secondary or ancillary clients?
- Who is your employer, and which privacy legislation applies (PHIA, FOIPOP, or both)?

### About the regulatory framework

- Which principle(s) and standard(s) of the *Code of Ethics* and the *NSRP Standards of Practice* apply?
- Are any mandatory reporting obligations potentially engaged? (See *Considerations for Psychologists when Disclosing Confidential Personal Information* and the relevant standards.)

### About your own analysis

- What is your current thinking about how the framework applies?
- What have you already done — consulted whom, reviewed which documents, considered which options?
- If you are a Candidate Psychologist (Conditional Register; formerly candidate registrant), have you consulted your supervisor?

The more clearly you have framed the question for yourself, the more useful the consultation will be — both with NSRP and with any other resource you draw on.

## Documentation

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Document all consultations. This includes consultations with NSRP, with peers, with APNS, with legal counsel, and with supervisors. Documentation should capture:

- The question as you framed it.
- Whom you consulted and when.

- The substance of the consultation and the advice received.
- Your reasoning at each decision point.
- The decision you ultimately made and the basis for it.

Documentation is not a bureaucratic exercise. Where a registrant is later asked to account for a decision — whether through a complaint, a practice review, or simply in the course of their own ongoing reflection — thorough documentation of the reasoning is the best record of the care that went into the decision.

The Code of Ethics frames consultation as protective. Documentation is what makes that protection effective.

## A Final Note

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The decision for action remains with you, as the registrant. NSRP, your peers, APNS, legal counsel, your supervisor, and your clinical consultants are all part of the architecture that supports that decision — but the decision is yours, and the responsibility for it rests with you. NSRP encourages all consultation, and we welcome registrants reaching out for the regulatory information and guidance we are positioned to provide.

## Governing Legislation, Regulations, and Bylaws

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The regulatory framework for the practice of psychology in Nova Scotia is established by the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 2023*, the RHPA General Regulations, the Psychology Regulations, and the NSRP Bylaws. The current versions of all four are available on the NSRP website:

<https://www.ns-rp.ca/public/legislation-regulations-bylaws/>

## How to Reach NSRP

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To consult with NSRP, please use the main office email, which is monitored by the NSRP Office Coordinator (whose role is to receive incoming inquiries and ensure they are addressed by the appropriate staff person). The current address is available on the contact us page at

<https://www.ns-rp.ca/contact-us/>

Ethics consultations are written, deliberative work. Response times vary depending on the complexity of the question and the office's substantive workload.

For genuinely urgent matters — mandatory reporting duties, situations of imminent risk — registrants should act on those obligations rather than waiting for consultation from NSRP.