

Newfoundland & Labrador Association of  
**Social Workers**

# **Continuing Professional Education Policy**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Social workers in every field of practice are committed to offering the highest quality professional services to the public. This commitment is expressed, in part, through the endorsement of the principle of lifelong learning and continuing professional education (CPE) which is a cornerstone of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005) and the CASW Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

The Continuing Professional Education Policy was originally developed by the Continuing Professional Education Committee in 1996 in accordance with the Social Workers Association Act (1993), the Regulations of the Act and the CASW Standards of Practice (1995). Following the initial implementation of the policy in 1996, it was revised in 1998, 2005 and 2010 by the NLASW Committee of Examiners with input from stakeholders to reflect the context and nature of social work practice in Newfoundland and Labrador.

A process of random audit of this policy began in 2007 and is conducted annually at the time of renewal of social work registration. The audit has confirmed that social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador are committed to lifelong learning. The average number of credits accumulated by NLASW members exceeds the requirements of the policy.

## CPE POLICY STATEMENT

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This policy is based upon an expansive and holistic vision of CPE. It endorses the principle of lifelong learning and it recognizes that CPE also takes place outside of formal, structured events.

The policy statement is as follows:

*Registered social workers are required to complete a minimum of 40 continuing professional education credits each registration year. Social workers shall receive 20 CPE credits for participating in activities drawn from the **required credits** category. The remaining balance of CPE credits may come from the **elective credits** category.*

The **required credits** refer to activities such as conferences, courses, workshops, seminars, in-service education and field instruction. The **elective credits** refer to learning that takes place through such activities as reading journals and books, mentoring, committee work, and offering public presentations.

Each Registered Social Worker is responsible for managing their continuing professional education. Beyond the responsibilities discussed in the Code of Ethics, the responsibilities of members are:

- To complete 40 CPE credits each registration year (March-February) in a manner that is consistent with the policy,
- To maintain a personal file that contains documentation verifying all CPE activities in which one has been involved.
- To participate in the random audit of Continuing Professional Education credits if selected
- To provide appropriate documentation to explain reasons if 40 CPE credits could not be completed,



### Required Credits

A member **must** obtain 20 or more hours per year of CPE credits that fall within the following activities:

**Certificate/Diploma Program:** A planned sequence of courses and/or workshops leading to a certificate that indicates completion or competence.

**Courses:** Sessions designed to increase knowledge or skill in an area directly related to social work practice.

**For Credit:** A formal course that enhances or relates to social work practice of at least 36 hours of classroom, distance education and/or lab-time completed at an accredited University. A member may claim credit for 40 CPE hours in the year that they complete the course and are entitled to a carry-over of 20 hours the next year.

**Non-Credit:** A formal course of a minimum of sixteen hours designed to increase knowledge or skill.

**Conferences:** Events of one to five days wherein a common theme is explored possibly through the use of different presenters discussing a variety of topics of relevance to social work practice. Generally the goal of a conference is to increase a professional's knowledge of the thematic area.

**Field Instruction:** Offering field instruction to social work students enrolled in accredited social work degree programs. Field Instruction means "primary responsibility for education, evaluation and recommendation of grade. This includes being available and involved, and co-ordinating the student's total field experience" (**BSW Policies and Procedures for Field Internships, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland 2008**) Members will be permitted to use 40 CPE credits for field instruction in the first year as a designated field instructor. Members may claim up to 20 CPE Credits for each subsequent year as a designated field instructor. Credits are claimed in the registration year in which the field instruction is completed. (ie. Field instruction occurring during the January – April semester is submitted in the following registration year). If a social worker is sharing full responsibility for the evaluation of a student with another social worker then members can claim half of the CPE credits (ie 20 CPE credits in the first year of shared field instruction; 10 CPE credits for each subsequent year of shared field instruction).

**In-Service Program:** Courses, workshops, seminars, or conferences provided by one's employer. These differ from in-service training in so far as the knowledge gained from an in-service program is more transferable to one's profession than specific to their job.

**Seminars:** Seminars are group activities designed to meet learning goals. They are less didactic in nature than the preceding two activities and generally more informal. Informal groups of this nature may have written learning goals or terms of reference.

**Workshops:** An educational event revolving around one topic. Workshops often focus on increasing skills in a particular area of social work practice.

### Elective Credits

NLASW members are able to claim 20 CPE credits a year from any of the following six categories:

**Self-Directed Learning:** This involves activities such as journal reading, the use of formalized instructional packages (reading, audio, video, etc.), the writing or research time that goes into preparing an article, presentation or piece of research.



**Mentoring:** A consultant-consultee form of learning that is normally formalized through the use of a learning contract. Learning contracts shall comply with the format that is generally accepted by the social work profession in the Baccalaureate program. Mentoring social work and other professional students is included in this category to a maximum of ten (10) credits per year.

**In-Service Training:** Continuing education provided by one's employer that is designed primarily to increase one's effectiveness in carrying out the tasks involved in one's job. (e.g. learning a computer program to assist in preparing monthly statistics).

**Committee Work:** Involvement in a committee that is working on tasks that relate to the purpose and function of the professional practice of social work.

**Professional Education Service:** Course delivery, conference presentation, workshop or seminar delivery, certificate program delivery, and in-service programs intended to promote the professional development of social workers and/or other helping professionals.

**Public Education Service:** The preparation and delivery of public education events about topics that relate to the problems or issues dealt with by the social work profession or a topic that relates to the purpose and function of social work.

## THE POLICY EXPLAINED: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Some of the central questions that have been posed since the inception of the CPE policy relate to the nature of the credit system and the method of recording and submitting CPE events. This section provides answers to the most common questions as a means of explaining the details of the policy.

### How to use the credit system

#### **Q1. What is a CPE credit?**

**Answer:** For the purposes of this policy, one CPE credit equals one hour spent in a continuing professional education activity. Social workers can claim credit to the nearest .5 credit (30 minutes). For example, if one completed a series of three 45 minute lunch hour seminars for a total of 2 hours and 15 minutes the credit would be for 2.5 CPE credits. If a category totaled 2 hours and 45 minutes it would be worth 3 CPE credits.

#### **Q2. Can I carry over CPE credits from one year to the next?**

**Answer:** Members are permitted to carry-over 20 **required credits** from the current to the next registration year. It is important to note that this only relates to required credits.

#### **Q3. I have been on leave, how many credits must I accumulate?**

**Answer:** If you are on leave of any form (maternity, sick leave, special leave) in a given registration year, you must obtain the following

- 3 months leave: 30 CPE credits
- 6 months leave: 20 CPE credits
- 9 months leave: 10 CPE credits
- 12 months leave: decision made on a case by case basis by forwarding a written request to the Registrar



**Q4. I am a part-time employee...how many CPE credits must I complete?**

**Answer:** Part-time employees are expected to demonstrate the same skills, knowledge and competence as a full-time employee. For this reason part-time employees must complete 40 CPE credits a year in accordance with the policy.

**Q5. I am involved in non-traditional social work practice...how does this policy apply to me?**

**Answer:** Continuing professional education is any activity that increases one's skills, knowledge and competency in the area of practice in which one is involved. This is the case regardless of whether a social worker is practicing in child welfare, policy development, administration, private practice or community development. Ultimately, the judgment about the appropriateness of an event or experience as a CPE credit depends upon an affirmative answer to the question: ***“did I learn something new from this experience that will help my continuing growth and development in my position and/or practice?”***

**Q6. What if I can't get 40 CPE credits in a given year?**

**Answer:** If you are unable to complete the full 40 CPE credits, then the reasons and a plan to obtain the credits should be submitted with the registration renewal form. The Committee of Examiners will review the documentation and work with individuals regarding the completion of CPE credits.

**Q7. At what point would a member lose their license to practice social work for not complying with the policy?**

**Answer:** Losing a license to practice is a very serious consequence for not adhering to a mandatory CPE policy and it is expected that this will be an extremely rare and unusual event. The Committee of Examiners is very clear that suspension of a license to practice would only take place when an individual has a history of not participating in CPE and all reasonable efforts to remove barriers and to be supportive to a member have failed. The Committee of Examiners will assess the appropriateness of this measure on a case by case basis.

**How to record and submit CPE events**

**Q8. Does the NLASW require pre-approval and submission of verification of my participation in CPE events?**

**Answer:** No pre-approval is required. The NLASW will focus its' efforts on working with CPE service providers to accredit activities prior to their delivery. Further, in keeping with the self-directed nature of this policy, submission of verification is not required unless audited. Members are still strongly encouraged to acquire verification (signatures, receipts, and letters of completion) for the personal CPE record.

**Q9. How do I submit my CPE credits?**

**Answer:** The CPE summary sheet shown below ***will be provided on the renewal form*** to each member and must be submitted as part of the annual registration renewal process.



**Sample of the CPE summary section of the registration renewal form**

<b>TYPE OF REQUIRED CREDIT</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>TYPE OF ELECTIVE CREDIT</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>
Courses		Self-directed learning	
Conferences		Mentoring	
Workshops		Committee work	
Seminars		In-service training	
CERTIFICATE/DIPLOMA PROGRAMS		Public education service	
Field instruction		PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE	
In-service programs			
<b>TOTAL REQUIRED CPE CREDITS</b>		<b>TOTAL ELECTIVE CPE CREDITS</b>	
<b><i>TOTAL CPE CREDITS FOR _____ REGISTRATION YEAR (REQUIRED + ELECTIVE) =</i></b>			



## APPENDIX ONE

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### **NLASW responsibilities regarding continuing professional education**

#### ***Leadership***

- To develop a policy that reflects the profession's ethical obligation to upgrade skills, knowledge and competency.
- To promote the evolution of a culture of "lifelong learning" in the social work profession,
- To advocate on behalf of members to employers to ensure that they recognize and support the continuing professional education needs of social workers,
- To promote, within the Social Work education community, responsibility for the development and delivery of acceptable continuing education opportunities and programs.

#### ***Program Sponsorship and Delivery***

- To sponsor or co-sponsor continuing professional education activities in a manner that ensures equal and equitable access regardless of whether the social worker lives in rural or urban areas,
- To enter into mutually acceptable agreements with partner organizations (e.g. MUN CPE program) in order to ensure that continuing professional education opportunities and services are available to social workers.

#### ***Communication***

- To promote awareness of local, provincial and national CPE offerings.

#### ***Policy Development and Evaluation***

- To regularly assess the CPE needs of social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador,
- To ensure that the policy standard is realistic and achievable by regularly evaluating its' effectiveness
- To conduct audits of the continuing education credits on an annual basis



