



# NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH INTERDISCIPLINARY CLINICAL IWK CLINICAL Policy and Procedure

<b>Title:</b>	Access to Abortions in Nova Scotia	<b>Number:</b>	NSHA CL-AP-025 IWK 633
<b>Sponsor:</b>	NSHA: Vice President Health Services Operations, Central Zone  IWK: Director Women's Newborn Health	<b>Page:</b>	1 of 7
<b>Approved by:</b>	NSHA: Vice President Health Services Operations, Eastern Zone  IWK: Policy and Practice Committee	<b>Approval Date:</b>	NSHA Nov. 10, 2021 IWK Oct. 21, 2021
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<b>Applies to:</b>	Team Members		

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**Note:** This policy does not apply to a person:

- Requiring Termination of Pregnancy for a medical reason.
- Requesting contraceptive intervention including Plan B (the “morning after pill”).

## PURPOSE

To set expectations for Team Members to provide a safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate response when interacting with persons requesting information about access to Abortion.

**Note:** Nova Scotia Women’s Choice Clinic (NSWCC) provides surgical and medical abortion clinic services. The clinic is based out of the Victoria General site of the QEII Health Science Centre in Halifax.

People can self-refer by calling the toll-free line (1-833-352-0719) to access information and make a self-referral to the NSWCC or other locations providing access to medical and surgical abortion.

## POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The provision of Abortions is a service supported by Nova Scotia Health and the IWK Health Centre.
  - Patients seeking this service will be appropriately directed/referred/informed they can contact/self-refer to the [Nova Scotia Women's Choice Clinic \(NSWCC\)](#).
2. Team Members who are unable or unwilling to participate in a conversation about abortion for any reason must provide a safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate response and refer the person to an alternate source of information (phone number or NSH website) or Team Member who can assist in providing the person with the requested information and care.

**Note:** When contacting the NSWCC for a Medical/Surgical Abortion the following applies:

**Medical Abortion:** Due to availability of Prescribers who have identified themselves as part of the Nova Scotia Centralized Abortion Network (NSCAN), a patient may not be able to have their Medical Abortion prescribed in their desired location. The closest Prescriber to their preferred location would be used.

**Surgical Abortion:** Due to availability of surgical locations, a patient may be referred to have their Surgical Abortion performed in an alternate location.

Social Work assistance is also available to patients seeking information and support regarding Medical/Surgical Abortions.

3. Prescribers who are unable/unwilling to prescribe or provide Abortion services must make a timely referral to facilitate reproductive choices or provide the patient with the contact information to self-refer in keeping with professional standards.

### Self-Refer

4. A person can access Abortion care in a variety of ways (e.g., primary care physicians, gynecologists, NPs, Sexual Health Clinics, Wellness Clinics, etc.) and they can self-refer to the [NSWCC](#).
5. Both Medical and Surgical Abortions are available through the self-referral process.

### Referral/Prescription through a Prescriber

6. Medical Abortion can be prescribed in any Nova Scotia Health facility, however due to availability of Prescribers who have identified themselves as part of the Nova Scotia Centralized Abortion Network (NSCAN), a patient may not be able to have their Medical Abortion prescribed in their desired location. The closest Prescriber to their preferred location would be used.
7. While both Qualified Physicians and Qualified NPs can prescribe medications for Medical Abortions, only physicians can perform Surgical Abortions.
8. Following a Medical Abortion, a patient must have a follow-up appointment within two weeks (at the discretion of the Prescriber) in a location that best meets their needs.

## PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Nova Scotia Health and IWK:

- Value non-discrimination and respect for all persons and are committed to providing care that is free from systemic bias which includes free from judgement and stigma.
- Recognize:
  - A person's right to access Patient Centered Care.
  - A Prescriber's duty to provide care, acknowledging that providing care includes referring to another Prescriber.
- Support the position that physicians and nurse practitioners (NPs) are not required to provide Abortions when this conflicts with their beliefs.
- Value prompt access to Abortion care and will make all reasonable efforts to refer closest to that location, when possible.
- Promote care that respects personal autonomy.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Team Member sharing materials with the individual requesting information about Abortion should provide relevant resources, such as:
  - 1.1. [NSHA Patient and Family Guide - Medical Abortion](#)

- 1.2. [NSHA Patient and Family Guide - Surgical Abortion](#) (Procedural Abortion)
2. Prescribers are responsible to provide:
  - Requested information about Abortion  
OR
  - Information to self-refer to NSWCC  
OR
  - Abortion service  
OR
  - A prompt referral to another Prescriber if they are unable or unwilling to participate in a conversation about Abortion for any reason.
3. NSWCC Staff are responsible to:
  - 3.1. Maintain a list of:
    - 3.1.1. Prescribers who will perform Abortions as part of the NSCAN.
    - 3.1.2. Facilities where Abortions are performed.
  - 3.2. Refer the person to appropriate Prescriber, who is part of the NSCAN, in the Province of Nova Scotia.
  - 3.3. Ensure patients receive prompt follow up and appointments.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Forms

Nova Scotia Women's Choice Clinic: [Referral Form](#)

### Brochures

[NSHA Patient and Family Guide - Medical Abortion](#)

[NSHA Patient and Family Guide - Surgical Abortion](#) (Procedural Abortion)

### Website

[Nova Scotia Women's Choice Clinic](#)

### Appendices

[Appendix A: Definitions](#)

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**Appendix A: Definitions**

<b>Abortion</b>	For the purpose of this policy means Termination of Pregnancy for non-medical reasons (includes both Medical and Surgical Abortions).
<b>Employees</b>	A person employed by NSHA whose salary and compensation are provided by NSHA.
<b>Medical Abortion</b>	A medical abortion uses two different medications, taken one to two days apart, to end a pregnancy and make the uterus push out the tissue (like a miscarriage). More detail provided NSHA Patient and Family Guide - Medical Abortion pamphlet, link included above.
<b>Nova Scotia Centralized Abortion Network (NSCAN)</b>	A network of self-identified Medical Abortion providers in Nova Scotia.
<b>Nova Scotia Women's Choice Clinic (NSWCC) Staff</b>	Physicians, Registered Nurses, Social Workers, Referral Officers
<b>People Centered Care</b>	People Centred Care "is an approach to care that consciously adopts individuals', carers', families' and communities' perspectives as participants in, and beneficiaries of, trusted health systems that are organized around the comprehensive needs of people." <i>World Health Organization, 2013.</i>
<b>Prescriber</b>	For the purpose of this policy means qualified physicians and nurse practitioners only who prescribe Medical Abortion.
<b>Qualified Nurse Practitioner (NP)</b>	A nurse practitioner who has the necessary training and experience to perform Medical Abortions.
<b>Qualified Physician</b>	A physician who has the necessary training and experience to perform abortions.
<b>Stigma</b>	Refers to attitudes and beliefs which result in prejudice and discrimination towards certain groups of people or Patient populations.
<b>Surgical Abortion</b>	A procedural abortion uses gentle suction (like a vacuum) to remove tissue from the uterus and end a pregnancy. This procedure is also called a uterine aspiration procedure or a "D&C", which stands for dilation and curettage.
<b>Team Members</b>	Unless specifically limited by a certain policy, refers to employees, physicians, learners, and other persons performing activities within Nova Scotia Health and IWK.

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**Termination of Pregnancy**

For the purpose of this policy refers to ending a pregnancy for medical reasons.

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## DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITY/IWK POLICIES BEING REPLACED

N/A

### VERSION HISTORY

Major Revisions (e.g., Standard 4 year review)	Minor Revisions (e.g. spelling correction, wording changes, etc.)
New to NS Health: 2021-11-30 New to IWK: 2021-11-30	