

ESCALATING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE & WORKLOAD CONCERNS FAQ

Revised: May 2026

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ESCALATE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND WORKLOAD CONCERNS?

SUN members have a historical, legally binding, robust process within their collective agreement, negotiated in good faith, for low-level resolution and collaborative problem-solving through a Joint Nursing Advisory Committee (NAC) composed of the Local, Members, and the Employer.

Collaborative problem-solving mutual goals include:

- ensure patient safety,
- safe practice,
- quality patient care improvement,
- professional standards, and
- evidence-informed practice.

When barriers, conflict, or reasonable solutions cannot be found at the Joint NAC by the Local Members, then additional intervention is needed to safeguard safe, high-quality, and appropriate healthcare services.

To learn more about work situation reports, escalation committees, and processes, please see SUN/SAHO Collective Agreement Articles 56 – 58 and Appendices A – F.

If you work under a separate collective agreement, review whether you have professional practice, nursing advisory process, Joint NAC, and escalation articles.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE ARTICLES IN MY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT?

Not all SUN collective agreements currently include professional practice language, a nursing advisory process, Work Situation Reports, or the ability to escalate concerns to the Board of the Employer or, beyond that, to an Independent Assessment Committee.

But that doesn't mean that professional practice, workload, and staffing concerns can't still be addressed at the Local level.

All SUN members can use low-level resolution when they have concerns in their work environment. You should talk to their Manager/designate to find solutions when concerns arise in practice; and, if unresolved, factually document the concerns and provide the information to your Local President.

Contact your Local President for assistance.

HOW DO WORK SITUATION REPORTS GET ESCALATED FOR RESOLUTION?

Unresolved professional practice and workload concerns documented on Work Situation Reports, which have been reviewed at a minimum of two meetings, and additional information has been collected within the Joint NAC, can be directed to three possible committees:

- Executive Oversight Committee,
- Employer Board of Directors, and
- Independent Assessment Committee.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE?

The Executive Oversight Committee is a non-mandatory committee under our collective agreements, including the professional practice, nursing advisory process, and escalation articles.

They provide senior-level support and oversight to Joint NACs and provide guidance on the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Joint NAC process, including removing barriers to success.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO ESCALATE TO THE BOARD OF THE EMPLOYER?

It is a Local decision to escalate Work Situation Reports that have been completed and reviewed at the Joint NAC after a minimum of two meetings.

This will normally take longer than two meetings to achieve true collaborative problem-solving, discussion, analysis, the collection of relevant data/statistics/information, and the determination of recommendations for resolution.

The SUN Nurse Practice Officer is an integral member of the Local team, responsible for escalating matters to the Board of the Employer (e.g., Saskatchewan Health Authority Board of Directors) and, beyond that, to an Independent Assessment Committee.

When preparing to escalate Work Situation Reports to the Board of the Employer, a written report will be developed using Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendations (i.e, SBAR) format, and a PowerPoint presentation will be created outlining the Work Situation Reports, problems, issues, evidence, data/statistics/information, collaborative problem-solving, and history leading to registered nursing and/or Nurse Practitioner-focused recommendations.

When this has been completed, a referral can be sent to the Board of the Employer using the steps and timelines established in the collective agreement to obtain intervention and recommendations for resolution.

Support for the NAC Chairperson and two Local/Unit Representatives is provided according to [SUN Membership Policy 066-M-2023 – Funding: Local Nursing Advisory Committee Preparation](#).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE BOARD OF THE EMPLOYER PRESENTATION?

Upon receipt of the Board of the Employer's written response, SUN Provincial may refer the matter to an Independent Assessment Committee if the Board's response does not provide a satisfactory outcome for the professional practice and workload concerns presented.

SUN Provincial, the Local NAC Chairperson, two Local/Unit Representatives, and the Nurse Practice Officer will begin preparations for a referral and presentation to an Independent Assessment Committee.

A referral to an Independent Assessment Committee must be submitted within 15 days of the reply from the Board of the Employer.

WHO MAKES UP THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE?

An Independent Assessment Committee is an independent 3rd-party panel composed of a jointly selected or appointed registered nursing Chairperson and a representative nominated individually by SUN and the Employer.

The Independent Assessment Committee hearing process and procedures are specified in the SUN/SAHO Collective Agreement, Article 58 and Appendix A.

The dates for the Independent Assessment Committee on-site Tour and in-person Hearing are determined by the Independent Assessment Committee Chairperson and the SUN Provincial and Employer representatives.

There are no required timelines for when the tour and hearing must occur in the collective agreement.

WHAT PREPARATION IS NEEDED FOR AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE?

The Nurse Practice Officer will work with the NAC Chairperson and two Local/Unit Representatives to expand on the Board of the Employer SBAR and PowerPoint presentation, focusing primarily on workload and the rationale for recommendations to resolve the escalated Work Situation Reports.

The priority is defining the workload issues, articulating registered nursing and non-nursing concerns, and the inability to perform professional responsibilities and obligations (i.e, legislative, regulatory, professional and organizational) that make patients, clients, and/or residents unsafe.

Recommendations will identify SUN and the Local's position on the resolution and propose the steps the Employer should be expected to take for safe, high-quality, competent, and appropriate registered nursing and/or Nurse Practitioner professional practice and safe care.

Support for the NAC Chairperson and two Local/Unit Representatives is provided according to [SUN Membership Policy 063-M-2023 – Funding: Arbitrations & Independent Assessment Committee \(IAC\) Hearings](#).

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FROM AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE DECISION?

The Independent Assessment Committee Panel can make both binding and non-binding recommendations in their decision.

- **Binding:** Recommendations directly affecting or impacting SUN registered nurses and/or Nurse Practitioners, and practice in the escalated unit/facility/area, to eliminate excess workload created by deficient registered nursing baseline staffing (example), and meet required regulatory, professional, and organizational obligations, and
- **Non-Binding:** Recommendations that apply to other healthcare providers, support staff and/or work environment beyond the unit/facility/area being escalated (examples).

SUN Provincial, Local Representatives and the Employer Representatives will meet within 30 days following the Independent Assessment Committee decision to determine binding vs non-binding recommendations.

Finalized binding recommendations and decision communication are sent to all SUN Members through a [SUNstoppable Spotlight](#) and posted to the SUN website.

SUN Provincial will not publicly release Independent Assessment Committee decisions unless the binding recommendations are not implemented in a reasonable manner.

If the Employer does not act on or reasonably address the recommendations, the SUN Board of Directors may escalate the matter to the Minister of Health and, in due course, to the media.

Additional questions or concerns can be directed to your Local President and/or NAC Chairperson.