



# PRC FAQS

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) OVERVIEW

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the Professional Responsibility Concern (PRC) Process were prepared by the AHS & UNA PRC Forum, that has been working collaboratively to develop resources to improve the effectiveness of the PRC process and Professional Responsibility Concern Committees (PRCC) around the province.

This is a resource for non-union exempt employees (NUEEs) who have United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) members working within their respective portfolios, UNA members / employees, and AHS & UNA PRCC representatives.

## SECTION 1: AHS / UNA COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT (CA)

What is the PRC Process and how is it different than what was previously outlined in the AHS / UNA Collective Agreement?

The PRC process is outlined in Article 36: Professional Responsibility in the collective agreement (CA) between AHS and UNA. It is a joint reporting process for identifying, discussing, and resolving concerns related to patient/resident/client care including staffing concerns in a safe and collaborative environment.

In February, 2018, a new CA between AHS and UNA was ratified and contains new language under Article 36. This language changes the PRC process by introducing new avenues for resolving concerns:

- 1) Discussing unresolved concerns with the applicable senior leader (e.g. Senior Operating Officer, Senior Program Officer, or Chief Zone Officer).
- 2) Voluntary mediation with the assistance of representatives from the Union and Employer.

- 3) Review of unresolved concerns by an Independent Assessment Committee (IAC).
- 4) The option to grieve a failure to adhere or implement a written PRC resolution under Article 32: Dispute Resolution Process.

Prior to these changes coming into effect, a concern not resolved by the PRCC was to be referred directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or designate. The CEO/Designate would provide a written response in reply to the concern. If the concern remained unresolved, the Local could request to present the concern to the governing Board. The new process allows for an intermediary step with the applicable Senior Leader prior to involving the CEO as well as the new IAC step after referring to the CEO, but prior to escalating unresolved concerns to the governing Board. Additionally, Parties have the option to utilize an internal mediation process at any step in the process.

# SECTION 2:

## PRC BEST PRACTICE RESOURCES

How was information on this new process relayed to Managers and UNA members?

This information has been communicated in a number of ways.

UNA and AHS each held information sessions within their respective organizations shortly after ratification of the new Collective Agreement which contained information on all the changes to the Collective Agreement, including the PRC process.

UNA and AHS jointly created a reference guide for employees/UNA members, managers, and PRC Committee members entitled Professional Responsibility Process (Best Practice). This reference guide includes guidelines, tips, and templates to support participants throughout the PRC process in improving the effectiveness of the process as a whole.

These jointly developed resources were launched throughout November and December, 2018 with joint presentations across the province by United Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith and Alberta Health Services Health Professions & Practice Vice-President Sean Chilton. In total, 27 sessions were attended by more than 1,000 union members and AHS managers. Entitled *Best Practice in PRC: Creating a Better Future*, the workshops emphasized the shared commitment of UNA and AHS to reset the culture around PRC in workplaces throughout Alberta.

Among the principles agreed to by both UNA and AHS, joint problem solving should occur through collaboration, in an environment of mutual respect, with the goal of resolving concerns as close to point of care as possible. The approach – set out in *Article 36, Professional Responsibility*, of the UNA/AHS Collective Agreement – also recognizes there must be full and consistent disclosure of available and relevant information. In addition, the parties agreed every step of the PRC process should occur within a just culture and adhere to professional standards.

Where can these resources be found?

The *Professional Responsibility Process (Best Practice) guide*, templates, and the *Best Practice in PRC: Creating a Better Future* presentation can be found on the UNA and AHS Web sites as follows:

**UNA:** <https://una.ca/memberresources/professionalresponsibility>

**AHS:** <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/hr/tls-is-prc-best-practice-guide.pdf>

Is there a plan beyond these sessions to educate managers and members?

Both AHS and UNA recognize that ongoing education will be required. The parties are currently discussing how best to meet this need.

Is the video recording of the joint presentation available on Insite?

Yes, the video is available on Insite as well as UNA's website.

**UNA:** <https://una.ca/memberresources/professionalresponsibility>

**AHS:** <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/tools/is/Page23115.aspx>

Does the PRC Best Practice Document apply to non-AHS Locals?

Covenant Health is utilizing a similar document and process to the one AHS and UNA are. Lamont Health Care Centre, as well as The Bethany Group (Camrose), do not have this process formalized, but are welcome to use any tools or guides they may deem to be helpful.

What is a PRC Response Form and does it need to be completed for every PRCF that is completed?

There is a CA requirement under Article 36 for written responses to PRCs. AHS has developed a form, the PRC Response Form, to assist Managers in providing a written response to Employee(s) who submit PRCs. The PRC Response Form should be sent to the writer(s) of the PRCF and the co-chairs of the PRCC.

This form and a PRC Response Form Checklist can be found on Insite and UNA's website.

**UNA:** <https://una.ca/memberresources/professionalresponsibility>

**AHS:** <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/frm/frm-21086.docx>

# SECTION 3:

## PRC PROCESS QUESTIONS

### What is a PRC?

A PRC is a “concern of Employees or the Employer relative to patient/resident/client care”. Common examples of PRCs include concerns or discussions about: staffing or skill mix, workload/assignments, communication, equipment or technology, space or environment where care is to be delivered, policies and procedures, orientation and training.

As professionals, everyone (Managers and Employees) is responsible for identifying concerns that impact the ability to deliver safe, competent and ethical nursing care and for taking steps to address identified concerns in a timely manner and to work collaboratively to improve patient care.

### How do I report a PRC?

The first step is for the Employee or Local to discuss the concern with your immediate Supervisor/Manager/Manager-on-Call in a timely manner (i.e. as soon as possible during or following the concern). In most cases this discussion will occur before a Professional Responsibility Concern Form (PRCF) is completed; however, the Employee or UNA Local may decide to fill out a form in advance of bringing the concern to the attention of the Manager because of timing or to assist in the discussion with the Manager.

Fill out a PRCF as soon as possible, provide as much detail as possible about the concern including recommendations to resolve the concern, and do not use the names of patients/residents/clients on the form.

You can fill out a paper PRCF or you may fill out the PRCF electronically on the UNA app and online at [dms.una.ca/forms/prc](https://dms.una.ca/forms/prc)

- **Paper PRCF:** provide a copy to your Local, your Manager, and keep a copy for yourself.
- **Electronic PRCF:** enter your Manager's email address to ensure they get a copy.

If the PRCF remains unresolved after discussing it with your Manager, the PRCF will be discussed at the joint UNA/Employer PRCC for your site/workplace.

For more tips on filling out a PRCF, please see the Reporting a PRC Checklist, within the Professional Responsibility Process (Best Practice) booklet or on Insite or UNA's website.

**UNA:** <https://una.ca/memberresources/professionalresponsibility>

**AHS:** <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/tls/is/tls-is-prc-best-practice-guide.pdf>

### Is it okay to fill out a Group PRCF?

If the same concern is observed by multiple Employees, they should consider filling out a Group PRCF. Employees signing a Group PRCF must have reviewed the contents of the PRCF, have had the opportunity to provide input on contents of the PRCF, and should not be pressured into signing it. A Group PRCF is recommended over each member filling out their own PRCF, as it is more efficient for the PRCC to discuss one PRCF versus multiple PRCFs about the exact same concern.

### Do I have to discuss the PRC with my immediate Supervisor or Manager?

We strongly encourage that the first discussion should occur between the Employee identifying the concern and their immediate Supervisor or Manager, as close to the Employee identifying the concern as possible. This gives the Manager an opportunity to work with the Employee to try and resolve the PRC as soon as possible. However, depending on the nature of the concern, availability or comfort of the Employee, the meeting may be between the Employee and Manager, or between the UNA Local and Manager, or a meeting of the UNA Local, the Employee and Manager. Where the concern is specific to one unit or program, there must be a discussion with the most immediate supervisor/manager before the concern can be discussed at the PRCC.

Discussions throughout the PRC process are to take place in a just culture environment where everyone feels safe, encouraged, and enabled to discuss patient care quality and patient safety concerns. Despite our collective best efforts, the potential for something to go wrong does exist. When that happens, Employee(s) and Manager(s) will be supported and treated with care, compassion, respect, and dignity.

### Is a signature from the applicable Manager on the PRCF required before submitting it?

No, a manager signature is not required. Once a form has been completed, and signed by the individual filling it out, it can be left for review by Management.

### Are there any time frames associated with bringing PRC forward?

Although no formal time frames exist, filling out a PRC as close to the time in which the concern arose is recommended. This helps to ensure that the information being captured is as current and accurate as possible and that the concern, which may pose a risk to patients and staff, is resolved as soon as possible.

If the concern is resolved, should a PRCF still be filled out?

If the concern is resolved, but the Employee would still like a record of such, they can fill in the PRCF and forward it to the PRCC, but the form should include the resolution. The PRCF could be shared at the PRCC as a success story and for learning purposes.

If an Employee brings a concern to a Manager and the Employee believes the concern is resolved, does it also need to be resolved by UNA?

If the concern has not yet been discussed at the PRCC, the Employee has the ability to resolve the concern without further consultation with UNA representatives. The Employee can have the UNA Local take it to the PRCC for information, or can simply consider the concern resolved and take no further action.

Does the Employee have to sign off a PRC or agree with the resolution before the PRC can be considered resolved?

If the unresolved concern has been advanced to and discussed at the PRCC, it is up to the elected UNA PRCC representatives to determine if the concern is resolved, which may involve consultation and follow up with the Employee(s) who submitted the PRCF.

Does an Employee need the permission of their Manager to fill out a PRCF or what if there is a disagreement whether the form should be filled out?

Consensus is not required to fill out a PRC Form (PRCF). If an individual believes, based on their own professional judgment, that a PRCF should be filled out, they are encouraged and have the right to do so.

What happens to the RLS after you fill it out?

RLS reports are sent to the applicable manager for review and follow-up.

Why is MySafetyNet not on the algorithm?

The algorithm contained in the Professional Responsibility Process (Best Practice) document summarizes the steps within this process related to identifying and resolving patient safety concerns.

MySafetyNet is the Employer reporting system for workplace health and safety concerns (WHS), which is not part of the PRC process.

What is the difference between Occupational or Workplace Health & Safety Concerns (OHS or WHS) and PRCs?

OHS or WHS concerns focus on the safety of Employees whereas PRCs focus on the safety of patients.

A concern may have elements of both patient safety and Employee safety.

→ For patient safety concerns report through the PRC process and RLS.

→ For Employee safety concerns report through the UNA/AHS CA (Article 34) OHS process and the AHS WHS (MySafetyNet) process.

When a concern has both PRC and OHS dimensions, the concern may be pursued through both processes.

Why is there nothing on the PRCF that addresses acuity on the unit?

PRCs related to acuity should be described in the detailed description of the concern on the PRCF. Acuity is not specifically addressed on the form as not all PRC submissions will be directly related to this.

Why does the PRCF have an LPN designation at the bottom of the form?

In some organizations external to AHS, LPNs are UNA members. This form is meant to be used by those organizations as well as within AHS.

Can an LPN fill out a PRCF?

Although PRCFs are specific to UNA members, this form could be used by an LPN as a template to broach discussion with their manager(s).

LPNs employed by AHS have a process in their CA to raise concerns related to patient/resident/client care.

Do we need quorum for a PRCC meeting to proceed?

Article 36 specifies that a PRCC shall be established with up to four Employees elected by the Local and up to four representatives of AHS; however, it does not specify a set quorum for meetings to proceed. It is up to the AHS site/program and UNA Local to identify their respective representatives on the PRCC and to determine if they are comfortable proceeding in the event that some of the PRCC representatives are absent..

## How often should a PRCC meet?

Article 36 specifies that the PRCC shall meet at least once a month, at a regularly appointed time. It is recommended that the parties make a commitment to meet monthly, even if there are no new PRCs. The meeting time can be used to continue proactively discussing concerns while keeping lines of communication open.

## When should a PRCF be resolved?

This depends on the concern being raised as each situation may be different. There are no timelines on how quickly a PRCF must be considered resolved or when it should be advanced to the next step in the process for resolution. There are often complex problems requiring complex and creative solutions raised through the PRC process. It will require a collaborative and respectful approach by PRCC representatives to fully understand the concerns and identify appropriate solutions.

Article 36 specifies that during problem solving discussions PRCC members should jointly collaborate on:

- Defining the issue(s);
- Identifying root cause(s) of the issue(s);
- Gathering and reviewing relevant information;
- Generating potential options for resolution of the issue(s);
- Resolving the issue(s), where possible.

Appropriately defining the concern(s) and identifying the root cause(s) of the concern(s) will assist PRCC representatives in identifying options for resolution. The PRCC may decide to resolve a PRC pending evaluation and monitoring over a specified time period. In this case, it is recommended that the PRCC jointly identify an appropriate evaluation/monitoring period and then jointly review the status of the PRC concern at the conclusion of that time period to determine if the PRC can then be considered resolved.

## The process includes a step that references a Senior Leader. Who is considered a Senior Leader?

It may vary from zone to zone, but could be an Area Director, Executive Director, or Senior Operating Officer. Managers will know who the applicable leader is within their areas and are the ones to move a PRCF up to this person.

## How do you deal with a PRCF that may be related to a personality conflict?

PRCs should relate to concerns about patient/resident/client care and should not be an avenue to raise performance concerns about an individual. If the PRCC deems that the PRCF is related in part or entirely to a personality conflict, the PRCC should determine the appropriate mechanisms to deal with those concern(s) outside of the PRC process. The PRCC has the authority to close PRCs that are not appropriate for the PRC process. This should be communicated to the Employee(s) who submitted the PRC including the rationale for that decision.

## Is there an ability to put each PRCC meeting minutes on Insite?

Although posting minutes on Insite is possible, PRCCs are currently encouraged to post minutes at a more local level. Each PRCC should determine how to best do that for their site/workplace.

## How is tracking/trending happening?

UNA has a database where all PRCFs submitted electronically by UNA members or entered on behalf of UNA members by Local representatives are tracked. Trends and statistics can be pulled from this database by UNA Local representatives and shared at PRCCs as part of the UNA update section of the Agenda.

## What mechanisms are in place to capture PRC information across zones in order to share information and learnings?

Although formal mechanisms are currently not in place to share PRC information across zones, AHS & UNA PRC Forum will discuss potential options for this as they continue their work.

## This is a significant change to how our PRCC currently works. How do we make the shift?

Tensions surrounding this process are more prevalent in some areas than others. We know this culture change will take time, but where do we start?

Trying to first create a culture shift within PRCCs is a great place to start. Once the PRCC is functioning well, it should have a ripple effect outwards as the PRCC members can lead by example and champion the process.