



Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board

Policy

Temporary Pharmacy Closure (Community)

Approved March 1, 2008

Reviewed May 2016

Revised May 2020

1) Introduction

Temporary closure of community pharmacies has the potential to have significant adverse patient impact. In accordance with the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board (NLPB) Code of Ethics, pharmacy professionals have an obligation to provide patients under their care with access to medications, pharmacy services and medication records, when needed and/or requested.

Before opting to temporarily close, pharmacists-in-charge are expected to explore all possible options for the pharmacy to remain open and continue to provide safe, quality care to patients.

It is recognized that there may be certain situations where a temporary closure is required. In these cases, pharmacists-in-charge and owners are expected to understand and abide by the requirements of this policy.

2) Planned Temporary Closures

It may be permissible for a pharmacy to close temporarily without surrendering the pharmacy licence in a situation where a pharmacist staff member needs to take leave and the pharmacy owner or pharmacist-in-charge is unable to find sufficient relief staff to support continued operations. In such situations, the following requirements must be met:

a) Prior to the closure:

- i) Obtain approval from the NLPB by completing and submitting a *Request for Temporary Closure*¹ form at least thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated start date of the temporary closure, whenever possible.

PLEASE NOTE: Generally speaking, only closures of up to fourteen (14) consecutive days will be approved, unless specific special circumstances described on the request form warrant a longer closure.

- ii) Consider any specific services that may require alternate arrangements, such as provision of services to personal care homes, opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT) services, specialized compounding services, and circumstances where the pharmacy is the only one in the community.

- Consult with prescribers and other members of the health care team, pharmacies in nearby communities, and the appropriate regional health authority to determine alternative options for medication access and delivery of other health services (e.g. injections, provision of OAMT).

b) Once the closure has been approved:

- i) Post signage in a prominent location at the front entrance to the pharmacy and at the dispensary counter at the earliest possible opportunity. Such signage should include information about the closure including the start and end date of the closure and any other information deemed

¹ Available on the Licensing Information for Pharmacies page of the NLPB website: <https://nlpb.ca/registration-and-licensing/licensing-information-for-pharmacies/>

necessary to promote access to pharmacy services during the time of the closure. **The signage at the public entrance must remain in place throughout the duration of the closure.** Other means of communication such as automated phone messages, media announcements, and/or social media postings should also be utilized, as appropriate.

- ii) Contact any patients who have prescriptions ready for pick-up to advise them of the closure and to provide them with an opportunity to pick up their prescriptions prior to the closure. Prescriptions not picked up at the time of the closure should be cancelled in the pharmacy's practice management system and the electronic health record so that the patient may access medications from another pharmacy without experiencing issues related to early fills.

3) Unplanned Temporary Closures

It is permissible for the pharmacy to close temporarily for up to ninety (90) days without surrendering the pharmacy licence in emergency situations, such as the sudden illness, of a pharmacist, severe weather situations, physical damage to the pharmacy, or public health emergencies. In such situations, the following requirements must be met:

- a) The NLPB must be notified of the closure as soon as possible including the circumstances surrounding the closure, plans related to maintaining the security of the premises, and how pharmacy records might be accessed, if needed. If possible, the anticipated reopening date of the pharmacy should also be included.
- b) Consider any specific services that may require alternate arrangements, such as provision of services to personal care homes, opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT) services, specialized compounding services, and circumstances where the pharmacy is the only one in the community.
 - Consult with prescribers and other members of the health care team, pharmacies in nearby communities, and the appropriate regional health authority to determine alternative options for medication access and delivery of other health services (e.g. injections, provision of OAMT).
- c) Signage must be prominently posted at the front entrance to the pharmacy. Such signage should include information about the closure, including the start and end date of the closure (if known), an emergency phone number, the location of the nearest pharmacy, and any other information necessary to promote access to pharmacy services during the time of the closure. Other means of communication such as automated phone messages, media announcements, and/or social media postings should also be utilized, as appropriate.
- d) If the closure is due to physical damage, prior to reopening, the pharmacist-in-charge may need to complete a renovation application and the pharmacy may be subject to a pharmacy assessment, in accordance with the NLPB *Requirements When Renovating an Existing Pharmacy/Dispensary*².
- e) The NLPB must be notified by the pharmacist-in-charge prior to reopening the pharmacy.
- f) If the closure exceeds 90 days, the pharmacist-in-charge should contact the NLPB office to discuss next steps. In this case, the pharmacy will have to be permanently closed and the licence terminated but it may be able to reopen in the future, under a new pharmacy licence.

² Available on the Licensing Information for Pharmacies page of the NLPB website: <https://nlpb.ca/registration-and-licensing/licensing-information-for-pharmacies/>