NSRDDA | Nova Scotia Regulator of Dentistry and Dental Assisting

Data Sharing and Privacy Policy

Policy Number: G-05.04.00	Next Review Date: 2029
Approved by: NSRDDA Board	Approval Date: November 3, 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is ensure that the collection, use, disclosure and protection of personal information by the NSRDDA is conducted in accordance with *Nova Scotia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPOP) and, where applicable, the *Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA). It supports the NSRDDA's statutory mandate to regulate the profession in the public interest, while ensuring that data practices reflect the NSRDDA's commitment to EDIRA.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all personal information and personal health information in the custody or control of the NSRDDA, including information related to registrants, applicants, members of the public, employees, Committee members, and third parties. It governs how information is managed during routine operations, investigations, hearings, practice reviews, and quality assurance processes.

3. Definitions

'Personal Information' means any recorded information about an identifiable individual. This includes things like their name, contact information (other than business contact information), identification numbers, personal characteristics (such as age, sex, or race), health or disability information, education and employment history, and their personal views or opinions about themselves. It also includes what others say about them.

'Personal Health Information (PHI)' means identifiable information about an individual's physical or mental health, health care history, health services received, and care providers.

'Data Sharing' means the act of disclosing personal information or personal health information to a third party for a lawful authorized purpose.

'De-identified Information' means data that has been stripped of personal identifiers and cannot reasonably be used to identify an individual.

4. Guiding Principles

The NSRDDA commits to:

- **Respecting dignity and privacy** by collecting only the data we need and explaining clearly why it is needed.
- **Culturally safe and trauma-informed practices** when collecting or handling information related to race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, or other equity factors
- **Inclusive data stewardship** aligned with the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (ownership, control, access, and possession) for Indigenous data, and similar frameworks for equity-deserving communities.
- **Accountability** through documented safeguards and oversight of data use and sharing.
- **Accessibility** by ensuring individuals can easily access, understand, and update their own information.

5. Policy Statement

(a) Collection of Personal Information

The NSRDDA collects personal information and personal health information only as authorized under its governing legislation, and solely for purposes aligned with its public interest mandate, such as:

- Registration and licensing processes
- Investigating complaints and concerns
- Conducting audits, practice reviews, and fitness-to-practice assessments
- Administering disciplinary, reinstatement, and quality assurance processes
- Communicating with registrants and the public

Information is collected directly from the individual wherever possible, and indirectly from third parties where permitted under FOIPOP, PHIA, enabling legislation or required by law.

The NSRDDA may request voluntary equity-related demographic data to improve fairness in registration, complaints, and other regulatory processes. Participation is optional (unless mandated by the Minister of Health) and will not affect decision-making.

(b) Use of Personal Information

Personal information, personal health information and equity-related data will be used only for the purposes for which it was collected or for a purpose consistent with:

- Fulfilling regulatory functions
- Monitoring and improving equity in program/service delivery
- Meeting legal obligations and public accountability standards.

Staff and Committee members must ensure that use of personal information is limited to what is necessary and proportionate to the task at hand.

(c) Disclosure and Data Sharing

Personal information or personal health information may be shared with third parties only as authorized by FOIPOP, PHIA, or the NSRRDA's enabling legislation. Typical disclosures include:

- Disclosure to other regulators in Canada or internationally under mutual recognition or mobility agreements
- Disclosure to law enforcement, health authorities, or oversight agencies when required or permitted by legislation
- Disclosure to legal counsel or experts assisting with investigations, hearings, or fitness-to-practice assessments
- Disclosure of discipline decisions and registration status to the public, as required by the NSRDDA's duty to maintain the information of registrants without a licence on the NSRDDA's website (see the *NSRDDA's Governance Policy on Maintaining the Information of a Registrant Without a Licence on the Regulator's Digital Platform*) and Section 158(b)(iv) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act*
- Disclosure in aggregate, de-identified form for reporting, evaluation, or research to support equitable regulation.

De-identified or anonymized data may be shared for research, statistical, or policy purposes, subject to approval by the Registrar.

Where personal health information is disclosed, the NSRDDA will meet obligations under PHIA, including ensuring data minimization, protection, and record of disclosure.

(d) Consent

Consent to collect, use, or disclose personal information will be obtained where required by the law. In cases where consent is obtained, it must be informed, voluntary, and specific to the purpose for which the information is being collected.

In many regulatory functions (e.g., complaints or investigations), consent is not required due to statutory authority, but individuals will be informed of how their information will be used when appropriate.

Individuals may withdraw consent for the collection of voluntary demographic information at any time unless such collection is required by the Minister of Health. Requests can be submitted to the Registrar in writing.

(e) Access and Correction

Under FOIPOP and PHIA, Individuals have the right to access their personal information or personal health information held by the NSRDDA and to request corrections if inaccurate or incomplete, except where restricted by law (e.g., ongoing investigations, solicitor-client privilege, third-party privacy concerns). Requests can be made in writing to the Registrar.

(f) EDIRA-Specific Protections

To ensure data is used to advance – not undermine – equity:

- Equity-related data is kept separate from regulatory decision-making processes unless explicitly relevant and disclosed.
- Data is disaggregated to identify and address systematic barriers, not to label, stigmatize or penalize individuals.
- Indigenous data is collected and used in accordance with the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®), where applicable.

(g) Safeguards and Retention

The NSRDDA is committed to safeguarding personal information, personal health information and voluntary demographic information using:

- Role-based access controls
- Secure physical storage and shredding protocols
- Encrypted electronic systems and regular IT audits
- Privacy training and confidentiality agreements for all personnel, Board members and Statutory Committee members

Records are retained in accordance with the NSRDDA's Retention and Destruction of Records Policy and relevant statutory requirements.

(h) Breach Management

In the event of a privacy breach, the NSRDDA will take immediate steps to:

- Contain the breach and mitigate harm
- Notify affected individuals where required
- Notify Nova Scotia's Privacy Review Officer or Department of Health and Wellness (as applicable under FOIPOP/PHIA)
- Document all breaches
- Review and update procedures to prevent recurrence

(i) Roles and Responsibilities

The **Registrar** is accountable for overall privacy compliance and is the NSRDDA's designated Privacy Officer. The Registrar oversees compliance, responds to access requests, and provides guidance on privacy matters. The Registrar is also responsible for ensuring that the NSRDDA maintains secure electronic data systems.

All **staff, contractors, and Committee members** are responsible for safeguarding personal information in their custody and for immediately reporting any suspected breaches to the Registrar.

(j) Training and Awareness

All staff and Committee members will receive regular training on:

- FOIPOP and PHIA compliance,
- Confidentiality and ethical data handling
- Secure handling of personal information or personal health information, and
- Breach response protocols.

5. Monitoring and Policy Review

The Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee will ensure that this policy is reviewed in accordance with the Board's policy review cycle or sooner if:

- There is a legislative change
- A significant breach occurs
- A gap or deficiency is identified during audits.

6. Accountability

The Registrar is accountable for ensuring compliance with this policy.

7. Contact

For questions about this policy or to submit a privacy-related request, please contact:

Privacy Officer
Registrar
Nova Scotia Regulator of Dentistry and Dental Assisting
103-210 Waterfront Drive
Bedford, NS B4A 0H3