



Why I'm glad I have LAP

TWO NURSES IN NEED OF LEGAL HELP TELL US WHY THEY WERE GRATEFUL TO HAVE ASSISTANCE FROM RNAO.

DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO RNAO'S [LEGAL Assistance Program \(LAP\)](#)? It covers you in circumstances that fall outside the scope of [professional liability protection \(PLP\)](#), which is an automatic benefit of RNAO membership. PLP provides legal coverage to members who are named in a lawsuit or criminal investigation related to nursing practice. There are other legal challenges in addition to being sued or investigated by police. And that's where LAP comes in. Together, PLP and LAP provide comprehensive legal protection for RNAO members.

LAP will protect you and your registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) if you are named in a complaint or report to CNO. For example, imagine you need legal advice about an employment-related situation such as a lay-off or termination. Or if you are named in an internal workplace complaint or investigation. Perhaps you have a work-related injury and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) denies your claim. Maybe you have a disability and your employer will not provide the accommodation(s) your health-care provider says you require.

In all these examples, LAP can help, provided such assistance is not offered by a professional union. Joining the

program is \$65 in addition to your annual RNAO membership fee, and the coverage supplements the PLP insur-

“LAP SUPPLEMENTS THE PLP INSURANCE THAT IS INCLUDED WITH RNAO MEMBERSHIP.”

ance that is included with your membership.

A small investment in LAP provides comprehensive legal coverage for all nursing practice issues, and additional peace of mind. Here are two nurses who found themselves in need, and were grateful they had LAP.

Laura*

After 33 years in nursing, and many of those years of service with the same employer, Laura found herself caught in the middle of a conflict between her organization's board of directors and one of its major funders. Suddenly and unexpectedly, Laura was given notice that her employment was being terminated without cause. She was offered a severance package.

As a LAP member, Laura was referred to a lawyer who helped her negotiate an appropriate severance package commensurate with her years of service and contributions to the organization. The legal fees associated with

these services were covered by LAP. Aside from removing the financial burden of hiring a lawyer at her own expense, Laura

says the practical and emotional support she received through RNAO and LAP helped her get through a very difficult time.

“When I found myself in the situation, you (RNAO) were one of the few (outlets) I could turn to and talk to,” Laura says. She was offered a buyout, but because of confidentiality, couldn't talk to anyone. RNAO offered comforting support and good advice, she says. “I knew that you were only a phone call away.”

Laura's advice to colleagues: “Never let your LAP lapse. The annual fee is a fraction of what it costs for a lawyer whose hourly rates can be anywhere from \$350 to \$650 or more.”

Luke*

After 28 years in nursing, Luke was named in a complaint to CNO for the first time. A patient under his care in a correctional facility alleged that Luke had denied him medication and failed to provide him with the care he required in a timely manner. Since legal assistance in CNO

matters wasn't available to Luke as a member of a non-nursing union, he was represented by a LAP lawyer throughout every stage of the CNO process. The investigation was a lengthy and stressful process that took more than a year to complete. In the end, it was determined that Luke had done nothing wrong. There were issues with the conduct of other staff at the institution.

“LAP provided me with peace of mind and ultimately a level of support that was nothing short of incredible,” Luke says. LAP, he adds, is “...assurance of assistance at a time when one truly needs it. Legal representation by a legal team well-versed in the nuances of medical-legal issues is a truly big thing. My experience with LAP has been positive, and without a doubt did much to alleviate any stressors or concerns that I may have had with this process.”

As these cases illustrate, nurses can be laid off or may face a complaint to CNO without ever having done anything wrong. Don't take chances with your reputation or registration. Protect yourself by maintaining your RNAO membership with LAP coverage. **RN**

MARA HAASE IS LAP ADMINISTRATOR FOR RNAO.

*Pseudonyms have been used to protect privacy.