



STANDARDS OF PRACTICE: PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Standards of Practice are a validated set of expectations that contribute to public protection. The Standards define the expectations for the profession, communicate the denturists' accountability to the public, and guide the denturist's practice. The College or other bodies may use the Standards of Practice in determining whether appropriate standards and professional responsibilities have been met.

Introduction

Demonstrating professional behaviours is a key component of a denturist's practice. The Code of Ethics and the Essential Competencies of Practice outline expected professional behaviours; and the professional misconduct regulations further define professional obligations.

This Standard of Practice defines professional obligations for denturists to practise in a professional and transparent manner. It outlines patient, inter-professional and intra-professional communication expectations and addresses professional obligations when working in a dual-practice capacity.

To help denturists understand their legal and professional obligations, the content is presented as a set of standard statements which describe broad practice principles. Each standard statement is followed by a corresponding performance indicator that explains how a denturist would meet the standard.

Defining Clear, Accurate and Transparent Communications

In all situations, clear, accurate and transparent communications are essential to obtaining and maintaining trust and respect from patients, colleagues and other professionals.

Denturists are responsible for ensuring they do not misrepresent themselves, or their knowledge, skill and legislated scope of practice. The public, team members and other professionals may be confused about the role of denturists who do not accurately communicate their title, and/or if they refer to themselves as "specialists." While the College recognizes there are clear and distinct areas in which a denturist may focus his or her practice, a process to establish certification and/or registration as specialists in a specific area of practice does not exist at the College. Therefore, denturists should not refer to themselves as specialists, other than a specialist in denturism.

The College also recognizes that some denturists hold dual registrations with another regulatory body (e.g. College of Dental Technologists of Ontario, Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario). The public has the right to be informed of what hat the member is wearing and what services are being provided (and charged for). Transparency therefore includes disclosing to patients when a denturist is working in any additional role.

Usually denturist services are terminated when they are no longer required; the patient requests the discontinuation; and/or the service agreement has expired. However, there are legitimate reasons for discontinuing services to a patient (see Glossary). In all cases, transparent policies on discontinuation of services, clear record keeping and proactive professional communication are expected behaviours for denturists.

Denturists are also accountable for facilitating and advocating for the best possible services and care for patients. They are required to take action in situations in which patient safety and well-being might be compromised. Managing these situations may present a challenge and, in some situations, an ethical dilemma for the denturists. Disagreeing with other professional opinions and/or plans of care in a manner that is transparent and respectful is a professional expectation.

Glossary

Dual practice	Hold two or more licences/registrations with more than one regulatory body. Denturist in dual practice perform activities that encompass aspects of both practices.
Transparency	The quality or state of being seen, heard, understood, and/or recognized without barriers or other means of blocking disclosure.
Scope of Practice	<p>Scope of practice refers to both the legislative scope of practice statement controlled act model. Describes the range of procedures, actions and processes that a regulated health professional is permitted to undertake in keeping with legislation and regulations.</p> <p>A practitioner is not legally precluded from performing a procedure beyond the profession's stated scope of practice, although he/she is precluded from performing controlled acts that the profession is not authorized to perform. The philosophy behind this approach is to move away from the exclusive scope of practice model for regulated professions, in order to permit professions to evolve and develop with changing technology.</p>
Discontinuation of Services	<p>Appropriate termination of services occur when the services are no longer required, when the plan of care has been met or the termination timing is part of the agreed upon plan of care.</p> <p>Ending the service agreement early for legitimate reasons such as non-adherence to proper treatment plans resulting in potential patient harm; verbal and/or threatening behaviour towards denturists and/or staff; illegal or unethical actions; and non-payment of fees owed for services rendered.</p>
Incapacitated /Incapacity	<p>This term is defined in the Health Professions Procedural Code (which is Schedule II to the <i>Regulated Health Professions Act</i>) as follows:</p> <p>"incapacitated" means, in relation to a member, that the member is suffering from a physical or mental condition or disorder that makes it desirable in the interest of the public that the member's certificate of registration be subject to terms, conditions or limitations, or that the member no longer be permitted to practise.</p>
Incompetence	<p>This term is defined in the <i>Regulated Health Professions Act</i> as follows:</p> <p>A member's professional care of a patient displays a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment of a nature or to an extent that demonstrates that the member is unfit to continue to practise or that the member's practice should be restricted.</p>
Terms, limits and/or conditions	<p>Any limitation on the members practice, and/or terms that must be fulfilled as imposed by the College. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising under some form of supervision or mentoring. • Limiting the activities or procedures that the member can perform.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising only where the member remains in treatment for an addiction or impairing mental illness. • Fulfilling a registration requirement. • A location limitation, such as not performing any mobile visits.
Mandatory report	<p>Mandatory reporting refers to the obligation under the <i>Regulated Health Professions Act</i> and the Health Professions Procedure Code for denturists to self report to the College a finding of an offence, professional negligence or malpractice made against him or her. As well the denturist must report when he or she has reasonable grounds to believe another member or member of another regulated health profession College has sexually abused a client.</p> <p>Facility operators must also file written reports to the College of the member in instances of professional misconduct, incompetence, professional negligence, suspected sexual abuse or concerns regarding incapacity.</p> <p>Every employer, partner or associate of a regulated health professional (i.e., a person registered with an RHPA College) or a facility offering privileges to them is covered by the duty to make such reports. The employer, partner, associate or facility does not need to be registered with an RHPA College to be required to make a report. The term “associate” is a broad one and covers any person who practises in any kind of business relationship with a regulated health professional.</p>
Reasonable grounds	<p>The decision maker has information beyond mere suspicion that patient safety might be at risk. It does not take a lot of information to trigger “reasonable grounds”. Such grounds fall well short of the “balance of probabilities” that is required to prove allegations at a discipline hearing.</p> <p>While the entire phrase, which reads “reasonable grounds to believe”, refers to a person’s belief, this is an objective test. Subjective opinions no longer have a place in determining whether a report should be made. Similarly a report must be made even if the person making the report does not believe that the member did anything wrong.</p>

The Standard

Standard Statement	Performance Indicators
Accurately and transparently represents oneself as a regulated health professional.	Signs all records with the appropriate professional designation "denturist" or "DD," according to registration class [e.g. Denturist (Temporary)/DD (Temp.), Denturist (Provisional)/ DD (Prov.)]
	Informs the patient and others of his/her professional designation and any terms, limits and/or conditions imposed on his/her registration.
	Does not include the use of any specialist title, credential or initials implying specialization.
	Does not represent self as a specialist (other than in denturism) to patients and others.
	Adheres to the Standard of Practice for advertising.
	Communicates registration class (general, inactive, temporary, and provisional) accurately to the public and respects restrictions on practice. (e.g. when presenting at speaking engagements inactive class must communicate denturists inactive status, inactive class may not practice the profession.)
	Notifies the College within 30 days of a change in employment.

Standard Statement	Performance Indicators
Maintains clear and transparent communications when working in a dual role.	Clearly communicates to the patient and his/her professional designations (via business card, verbally, website) and explains the differences in their scopes of practice.
	Maintains separate records when working in a dual practice and signs with the appropriate professional designation in the applicable record.
	Communicates and performs within legislated limits when dually registered but working and/or employed solely as a denturist.

Standard Statement	Performance Indicators
Discontinues services in a professional and transparent manner.	Clearly communicates to the patient the terms and duration of the services, including when services will expire or be terminated, before commencing.
	Provides the patient with five working-days' notice of the intent to terminate services.
	Prior to termination, discusses with the patient and/or substitute decision-maker the concerns, possible resolution and potential risk of termination of services.
	Prior to termination, allows a reasonable opportunity for the patient and/or substitute decision-maker to make alternative arrangements for services.
	Provides patient with written notice of termination delivered by courier, registered mail, by hand or an electronic means that provides confirmation of receipt.
	Designates a period of time during which emergency services will be provided before termination.
	Transfers patient records to the new care provider according to the Standards of Practice: Record Keeping
	Informs the patient that all relevant patient records will be promptly forwarded when a new provider is secured.

Standard Statement	Performance Indicators
Demonstrates professional behaviours and meets obligations when disagreeing with another professional opinion and/or plan of care.	Assesses the situation and consults with the patient, colleagues, other experts, and evidence-based literature to inform opinion.
	Refers to College's Standards of Practice, legislation, regulations and/or workplace policies before taking action.
	Informs the responsible professional of the concern and provides an evidence-informed rationale for the concerns and/or disagreement.
	Demonstrates active listening skills and respect for others' opinions.
	Takes immediate actions when patient and/or others are at risk of harm.
	Reports termination or the intent to terminate employment and/or restriction of employment duties (restriction of practice or privileges) of a regulated healthcare professional for which there are reasonable grounds to believe misconduct, incapacity, or incompetence has occurred to the appropriate regulatory body.
	Reports issues of incapacity and/or incompetence of a regulated health profession to the appropriate regulatory body when there are reasonable grounds to justify concerns.
	Informs others (including the primary person with whom you have the disagreement) of the decision to take action and of any actions taken to date.
	Ensures that communication is professional and polite irrespective of responding behavior.
	Documents in the client's record the concerns and the steps taken that directly relate to patient care.
Documents facts, all steps taken and rationale for actions when making a report against another regulated health professional.	

References

Denturism Act, 1991 Ontario Regulation 854/93 Professional Misconduct Regulations
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/930854>

Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/04p03>

Your Health Information: Your Access and Correction Rights, Information and Privacy Commission of Ontario;
 2005 <https://www.ipc.on.ca/images/Resources/fact-02-e.pdf>

Mandatory Reporting, FHRCO Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges of Ontario