



Guide to Closing, Leaving or Selling a Practice

Introduction:

When a Registered Denturist is going to close, leave, or sell a denture clinic, there are things that need to be taken into consideration.

If there will be no denturism care in the location that the Registered Denturist is leaving the practice, then patients must be informed by the Denturist before the office closes or the Denturist leaves. In the case where the clinic is closing entirely, this notification is a professional obligation.

Patients have the right to choose their care providers. When denturism services will continue to be available at the location, contractual obligations cannot create barriers to patients who wish to continue care with the departing Denturist. Therefore, patients should be advised by the practice owner/employer/business associates of the departure of a Denturist with whom they have developed a professional relationship in a constructive, timely and professional manner. When requested by a patient, contact information for the departing Denturist must be provided. It is unethical and unprofessional for a practice owner/employer/business associate to refuse to provide information or mislead a patient on the whereabouts of a Denturist.

If a Registered Denturist has a contractual obligation to refrain from informing their patients of their departure, they may be obliged to honour this obligation and should seek legal counsel. That is a private matter between the Denturist and their employer. Registered Denturists are advised to avoid agreeing to such contractual obligations as they do not serve patient interest.

Guidelines:

1. Determine whether the departing Denturist is a Custodian or Agent
 - a. If the departing Denturist is the Custodian (owner of the records) they may take the patients' records with them when they leave a practice. When the records contain documentation from other practitioners that may have treated the patient, the Denturist has an obligation to maintain the records and may be required to provide access to the other practitioners. The departing Denturist may consider leaving a copy behind.
 - b. If the departing Denturist is not the Custodian, they may take a copy of their patient records with them, provided the Custodian agrees. If the Custodian does not agree, the departing Denturist can leave the records behind on the understanding that they will be maintained for the required period of time and that the departing Denturist can have access to them if required. It is inappropriate for the departing Denturist to remove the original or a copy of the records without permission if they are not the Health Information Custodian.
2. Develop a protocol for notifying patients of any changes to the practice. This protocol should include a description of the content of any patient notices and the individual in the practice that is responsible for communicating the changes.

3. Inform patients of the change in practice location and/or change in practitioner, in writing.
4. Ensure patients receive notice in a manner that supports continuity of care.
5. Provide patients with contact information for other denturism providers in the area or resources that will help them find another practitioner.
6. Discuss patients who require ongoing care with the care provider that will be taking over, if applicable.
7. Ensure that patients know where they can access their records.
8. Arrange for the secure storage of patient records if the clinic is closing.
9. Advise patients that they have the right to choose their provider.
10. Notify the College within 30 days of a change in employment or the cessation of practice. This notification must be provided by updating the Member's Profile through the Member Portal.

Practice Scenario:

Sherry, a Registered Denturist, has been working as an Associate at a denture clinic for 10 years. Her family recently decided to move to another city. As Sherry is not the Health Information Custodian, she can take a copy of her patient records if the Health Information Custodian agrees. If the Health Information Custodian does not agree, Sherry can leave the patient records at the denture clinic on the understanding that they will be maintained for the required period of time and that she can have access to them when required. It would be inappropriate to remove the original records or copies without permission if Sherry is not the Health Information Custodian. In either case, Sherry must inform her patients of where they can access their records.

Practice Scenario:

Raj, a Registered Denturist, rents space out of a dental clinic – he is the Health Information Custodian for the denture patient records. Raj decides to open his own clinic location and notifies his patients with the following letter:

Dear Patient;

I have enjoyed being your Denturist at (Name of Original Practice Location). As a courtesy, I would like to inform you that as of (Date), I am moving my practice. My new address and telephone number will be (New Address & Phone #). You may continue to receive your denturism care at (Name of Original Practice Location) or transfer your care to my new practice. As the patient, the choice is yours. Your records will be maintained at (Specify Location – Original or New Clinic) and may be transferred to the location of your choice upon request.

Sincerely,
Raj, DD

Raj also puts a copy of the announcement in the local newspaper.