



Standard of Practice: Professional Boundaries

Preamble

Professional relationships in health care are built on mutual trust and respect. Mutual trust and respect are fostered by appropriate management of boundaries between health care providers and patients.

Boundary violations may be inadvertent or intentional. They are frequently facilitated by the power imbalance that exists between a health care provider and a patient. Boundary violations can cause minor or major physical, emotional or economic harm to patients. Registered Denturists must exercise their professional judgement in a manner that establishes and manages appropriate boundaries in a wide variety of circumstances.

This Standard articulates the College's expectations for Registered Denturists regarding the appropriate management of professional boundaries.

Pursuant to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* a romantic or sexual relationship with any patient, (except, after October 21, 2021, their "spouse" as defined in section 1(6) *Health Professions Procedural Code*¹) is considered sexual abuse, even if the individuals involved "consent" to the relationship. Such sexual abuse can establish the grounds for professional misconduct.

The Standard

A denturist meets the Standard of Practice: Professional Boundaries when they:

1. Establish and engage in a clinical practice setting that maintains professional boundaries, free from harassment and sexual abuse.
2. Maintain professional behaviour towards patients, staff and other health care providers.
3. Communicate respectfully, professionally and appropriately.
4. Recognize and understand the power imbalance within the denturist-patient relationship.
5. Refrain from behaviours, remarks or gestures that increase the risk of boundary violations.
6. Do not treat anyone with whom they have/had a sexual/romantic relationship, within the restrictions, timeframe and framework specified by the RHPA.
7. Comply with mandatory reporting obligations regarding the sexual abuse of patients as outlined in the RHPA.
8. Document unintentional boundary violations in the patient record.

¹ 1(6) "spouse", in relation to a member, means,

- (a) a person who is the member's spouse as defined in section 1 of the *Family Law Act*, or
- (b) a person who has lived with the member in a conjugal relationship outside of marriage continuously for a period of not less than three years.

Legislative References

Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991

Health Professions Procedural Code

O. Reg. 260/18: Patient Criteria and Spousal definition Under Subsection 1 (6) of the Health Professions Procedural Code

Related Standards of Practice

[Standard of Practice: Record Keeping](#)

[Standard of Practice: Confidentiality & Privacy](#)

Revision Control

Date	Revision	Effective
June 19, 2020	Approved by Council	September 1, 2020
January 19, 2022	Changes arising from the spousal exception incorporated	January 19, 2022