

Standards of Practice



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta (the College) is the regulatory body for the dental hygienist profession in Alberta. The College's authority is granted by the Government of Alberta through the *Health Professions Act (HPA)*.

The College's mandate is to protect the public from unsafe and unethical practice and hold dental hygienists accountable for the care they provide. The College does this by developing, maintaining, and enforcing professional regulations, standards of practice, and codes of ethics.

PURPOSE

Standards of Practice set the minimum levels of professional behaviour and conduct of regulated health professionals. It is the responsibility of the dental hygienist to understand the College's Standards of Practice and adhere to them in their practice of dental hygiene. Performance below the minimum standard is considered unprofessional conduct as per the HPA.

The Standards of Practice serve several purposes, including:

- Defining for dental hygienists the minimum performance expectations that they must meet in their practice.
- Providing the public, employers, and other health professionals with benchmarks against which the professional practice of a dental hygienist can be measured.
- Fulfilling the requirements for the profession as set out by the Government of Alberta in the HPA.
- Equipping the College with a legal framework for investigating complaints and pursuing disciplinary actions.

CONTEXT

The Standards of Practice:

- exist to support the College's mandate to ensure Alberta dental hygienists have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment to provide safe, effective, ethical, and beneficial oral healthcare services to the Alberta public.
- are applicable to all dental hygienists in Alberta regardless of practice setting.
- are comprised of standalone Standards that are to be considered part of a comprehensive unit of Standards that dental hygienists use in conjunction to inform their practice.
- align with and are mutually supportive of other regulatory documents that guide the profession, including the HPA, Dental Hygienists Profession Regulation, and the College's Code of Ethics, Bylaws, and various guidelines.
- set the minimum levels of professional behaviour and conduct for dental hygienists, and where inconsistencies exist between Standards of Practice and employment policies, dental hygienists are expected to meet or exceed the Standard of Practice. (e.g., If a Standard of Practice exceeds the expectation of an employer policy, the dental hygienist is expected to meet the Standard of Practice.)
- will evolve over time, and substantive changes will be adopted only after consultation with the profession and others as prescribed under the HPA.

FORMAT

The Standards of Practice are listed alphabetically for ease of access.

Each of the Standards of Practice are generally structured with the following headings, with some exceptions.

Standard Statement:

describes the minimum legal and professional level of performance required by a dental hygienist.

Performance Expectations:

outline the actions that must be demonstrated by the dental hygienist to indicate how the Standard is met in practice. The expectations are not all inclusive nor are they listed in order of importance.

Client Expectation:

describe the outcomes that the **client** may expect when a dental hygienist meets the standard.

Glossary:

includes definitions of specific terms used in each Standard of Practice. Defined words are bolded the first time they appear in a Standard of Practice.

Resources:

a list of references with legislative or other background information related to the Standard of Practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that the language used in some Standards of Practice has been adapted from:

- Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists (ACMDTT)
- Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA)
- Alberta Dental Association and College (ADA&C)
- Alberta Health Services Consent to Treatment/Procedure(s) Policy
- College of Dietitians of Alberta (CDA)
- College of Naturopathic Doctors of Alberta (CNDA)
- College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA)
- College of Physiotherapists of Alberta (CPTA)
- College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA)
- FDHRC Entry to Practice Competencies for Canadian Dental Hygienists

GLOSSARY

CLIENT

Refers to an individual, family, group, community, or organization accessing **dental hygiene services**. The term client in these standards also includes the client's legal guardian or substitute decision-maker legally authorised to act on behalf of a client when appropriate. An individual client may also be referred to as a patient.