



The College is updating its documents to reflect the transition to regulation under the Health Professions Act and College Bylaws. The principles and requirements outlined in all documents continue to apply to dentists and CDAs.

Code of Ethics

1. **Purpose.** This Code of Ethics provides:
 - (a) a general statement of the principles and standards of ethical conduct which registrants are required and expected to follow in their professional and personal lives, in order to fulfill their duties to the public, to their patients, to the profession, and to their colleagues; and
 - (b) some examples of required standards and prohibited conduct, which are intended to illustrate the broad ethical principles by which registrants must evaluate and govern their conduct.
2. **Broad principles.** To uphold and advance the honour and dignity of the dental profession and its high standards of ethical conduct, registrants must:
 - (a) be honest and impartial in serving their patients, the public, and their profession;
 - (b) strive to increase the competence and prestige of their profession;
 - (c) use their knowledge and skill to promote the health and well-being of their patients and the public; and
 - (d) respect the dignity and professional status of, and professional relationships with, their colleagues.
3. **General duties.** Every registrant has a duty to uphold the honour and dignity of the profession of dentistry and to adhere to the principles and standards of conduct in this Code of Ethics.
4. **Self-government.** The profession is given the privilege of self-regulation under the *Health Professions Act*. Accordingly, registrants must familiarize themselves with the Act and College Bylaws, and must strive to observe and perform their duties and obligations thereunder.
5. **Duties to the public.** Registrants owe a duty of service to the public, and, in rendering that service, must strive to maintain high standards of integrity and ethical behaviour. Service to the public includes, but is not limited to, the following:

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- (a) **Education.** Registrants are encouraged to educate the public in the promotion of dental health. Presentations for such purposes must be in accordance with Part 12 of the Bylaws and generally accepted professional standards.
- (b) **Community activities.** In their practices, registrants have opportunities to meet many people and to appreciate the interests and problems of a large cross-section of the public. Accordingly, registrants are encouraged to take an active interest in community affairs, and to assume leadership in activities whose purpose is to improve the health and well-being of individuals and the community.
- (c) **New discoveries and patents.** No registrant may keep secret for private advantage any advance or discovery in any branch of dental science. Such advance or discovery must be made common knowledge, for the advantage of humanity, the profession, and the progress of science, through journals and scientific publications. The lay press is not the proper medium for registrants to announce new developments or discoveries in dentistry. Registrants may patent instruments, appliances, and medicines or copyright publications, methods, and procedures, but registrants may not obtain a patent or copyright and use it for personal aggrandizement or financial gain to the detriment of the public or the profession. However, receiving a fair financial return for the product of ingenuity will not, in and of itself, be considered contrary to the HPA and Bylaws.
- (d) **False declarations.** Registrants must not make any statement or declaration or sign any certificate or any other document, or induce or permit a patient to sign any certificate or document, which they know or ought to know to be untrue, misleading, or otherwise improper.
- (e) **Reporting requirements.** A registrant must report to the Registrar, without delay, any conduct or practice of a registrant which raises a substantial question as to a violation of the Code of Ethics, or as to whether the registrant has provided, is providing, or will provide competent, safe and appropriate dental care to patients.
- (f) **Criminal charges.** A registrant must advise the Registrar without delay if he or she is charged with or convicted of an offence under the *Criminal Code of Canada*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46, the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, S.C. 1996, c. 19, or the *Food and Drugs Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. F-27.

- (g) **Discrimination.** Registrants must not discriminate against, coerce, or otherwise penalize or disadvantage any person because that person makes a complaint to the College, or gives evidence or otherwise assists the College in investigating or determining a complaint or any other proceeding by the College under the Act or Bylaws.
6. **Duties to the patient.** The primary consideration of registrants is the health and well-being of their patients. Service to patients includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- (a) **Personal information confidential.** Information about patients which registrants acquire in their practices must be kept in confidence, and must not be disclosed to anyone, except as may be necessary to protect the welfare of the patient or the public, as may be required under the Act or Bylaws or otherwise by law, or to the extent the patient has expressly agreed that the registrant may disclose information.
- (b) **Dental emergencies.** *A dental emergency exists if professional judgment determines that a person needs immediate attention to deal with uncontrolled bleeding, uncontrolled swelling, traumatic injury or uncontrolled severe pain. Dentists have an obligation to consult with and provide emergency dental care to members of the public, or make a reasonable attempt to provide alternative arrangements in their absence.*
- This statement relies on the dentist's professional judgment, combined with an appropriate patient assessment, as being the determinants of an appropriate response in an emergency or emergent situation. The statement reaffirms the dentist's responsibility to ensure they, or another dentist, are available to respond to patient emergencies after regular business hours. Where the dentist determines that it is appropriate to do so, many patient problems can be handled over the phone.
- (c) **Duty to keep knowledge current.** Registrants must keep their knowledge of dentistry current, for as long as they are in practice, and must always treat patients in accordance with current generally accepted professional standards. To that end, registrants are encouraged to read and learn from professional journals, and attend dental meetings and such post-graduate courses as may be necessary to fulfill that duty.
- (d) **Treatment.** Registrants must render treatment only in accordance with current generally accepted professional standards, except that registrants may use experimental methods and materials in treatment:

- (i) within the bounds of accepted scientific criteria for well-designed experiments, such as the human experimental protocols established by the University of British Columbia for research and other studies involving human subjects in effect from time to time;
- (ii) after obtaining the prior written approval of the committee authorized by Board to grant that approval; and
- (iii) in accordance with the requirements set forth in that approval.

Registrants must clearly inform patients receiving experimental treatment that they are involved in an experiment, and of the range of possible results and potential problems involved in that experiment.

- (e) **Consulting on treatment plans.** Registrants may treat patients only when they are qualified by training or experience to carry out the treatment plan. Registrants must always be willing to check their diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis by consultation with fellow practitioners or specialists in the fields of health sciences pertaining to the case under consideration. Registrants must refer a patient when advisable.
- (f) **Delegation and referral of duties and procedures**
 - (i) Registrants must not delegate or refer any duty or procedure to a person who is not qualified to perform such duty or procedure by skill and training, or by licensure if required under the Act or the Bylaws, and must not condone or be a party to any such delegation or referral. Registrants must ensure that the actions of all persons under their direction or personal supervision comply with the Act and Bylaws.
 - (ii) Registrants must not accept delegation or assignment of any duty or procedure which they are not qualified to perform, by reason of their lack of appropriate and recognized training, or required licensure.
- (g) **Adequate records and transfer of records**
 - (i) Registrants must keep adequate records of their clinical findings, diagnoses, and treatments with respect to each of their patients. Upon receipt of a request from a registrant who is treating a patient, a registrant who is in possession of that patient's clinical records must, with the permission of that patient or legally authorized representative, make copies of the clinical records available to the requesting registrant within 30 days or such shorter time as may be necessary or

appropriate in the circumstances in order to ensure continuity of dental care. Registrants may charge a reasonable fee for such copies.

- (ii) Registrants must also provide patients with copies of their clinical records upon request except where release of such information could reasonably be expected to result in harm to the patient or a third party. Registrants may charge a reasonable fee for such copies.

(h) **Fees for services, methods of compensation and contract practice.**

- (i) Registrants must not pay commissions or allow discounts as consideration for patients being referred to them for consultation or treatment. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, two or more registrants must not enter into any arrangement under which one registrant receives part of the fee paid to the other, or a composite fee is distributed, by way of commission or discount.
- (ii) Only individual registrants, or corporations approved under Part 4 of the HPA and Part 11 of the Bylaws, may charge for services rendered or recover those charges. However, individual registrants and corporations approved under Part 4 of the HPA and Part 11 of the Bylaws may direct, on their accounts, that patients remit fees to a dental group or partnership, to which the registrant or corporation belongs.
- (iii) No registrant, either directly or indirectly, may participate in any plan, scheme, or arrangement, or do anything which might or would:
 - (A) have the legal or practical effect of fettering, limiting, or interfering with a person's freedom or ability to choose his or her dentist;
 - (B) result in compensation for the registrant's services such that the registrant would not or would not be likely to render adequate services to a patient, in accordance with then current generally accepted professional standards; or
 - (C) directly or indirectly yield profits to any controlling lay groups, persons, firms, or corporations, except for corporations approved under Part 4 of the HPA and Part 11 of the Bylaws;

except that Board may grant its prior approval to any of the foregoing in exceptional circumstances.

- (i) **Warranties.** Registrants must not warrant or guarantee the success of operations, appliances or treatment.
7. **Duties to the profession.** Registrants must uphold the honour and integrity of their profession. Duties to the profession include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (a) **Advancement of profession.** Registrants are encouraged to support actively the advancement of the profession through local, provincial, and national societies.
 - (b) **Obligations to the College.** Registrants must:
 - (i) reply promptly to any communications or requests from the College, any of its committees, subcommittees or panels, the Registrar or a Deputy Registrar;
 - (ii) comply with any terms or conditions they have agreed to with the College, any of its committees, subcommittees or panels, the Registrar or a Deputy Registrar; and
 - (iii) take any action they have agreed to take with the College, any of its committees, subcommittees or panels, the Registrar or a Deputy Registrar.
8. **Duties to colleagues.** In relationships with their colleagues, registrants must conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Duties to colleagues include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (a) **Judgments.** Registrants may not comment or pass judgment on the qualifications of, or procedures rendered by, other registrants, except:
 - (i) if such comment is in the best interests of the patient;
 - (ii) if so requested by the College; or
 - (iii) as otherwise required under the Act or Bylaws.
 - (b) **Referrals.** A registrant to whom a patient has been referred for consultation or treatment should render only such consultation and treatment as the referring registrant has specifically requested. However, registrants are encouraged to discuss the consultation and the treatment rendered and any perceived problems with the patient and with the referring registrant. The

patient must be referred back to the referring registrant when the referred service is complete.

- (c) **Competence.** Registrants must not compare their professional competence to that of other registrants.
8. **Group dental practice.** Group dental practice is the provision of dental services by two or more registrants working in systematic association with the joint use of equipment or auxiliary personnel, or with centralized administration or financial organization. Each registrant of a dental group must ensure that any acts performed in the name of the group comply with the Act and Bylaws. Each individual registrant of the group is personally responsible for any unethical or unprofessional activities performed in the name of the group.