

Standards of Practice



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Alberta College of Dental Hygienists (the College) is the regulatory body for the dental hygiene profession in Alberta. The Government of Alberta grants the College authority to govern the profession 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 the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

PURPOSE

Standards of Practice set the minimum levels of professional behaviour and conduct for regulated health professionals. It is the dental hygienist's responsibility to understand the College's Standards of Practice and adhere to them in their practice of dental hygiene. Non-compliance with the Standards of Practice may be the basis for disciplinary action under 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 dental hygienists in Alberta have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment to provide safe, effective, ethical, and beneficial oral health care services to the public.
- Apply to all dental hygienists in Alberta regardless of practice setting.

- Refer to the term “patient” throughout; however, the terms “**patient**” and “**client**” are interchangeable, depending on the circumstances surrounding the provision of dental hygiene services.
 - **Patient:** an individual awaiting or receiving oral health care services and/or treatment from a dental hygienist.
 - **Client:** An individual, family, group, community, or organization accessing dental hygiene services. The term client also includes the patient’s legal guardian or substitute decision-maker legally authorized to act on behalf of a patient when appropriate.
- Are structured as a series of stand-alone documents that collectively form a comprehensive unit of standards to inform a dental hygienist’s practice.
- Align with and are mutually supportive of other regulatory documents that guide the profession, including the HPA and other legislation, Dental Hygienists Profession Regulation, Health Professions Restricted Activity Regulation, and the College’s Code of Ethics, Bylaws, Guidelines and Policies.
- Set the minimum levels of professional behaviour and conduct for dental hygienists. 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’s 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 as prescribed by the HPA.

FORMAT OF THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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

Each Standard of Practice is generally structured with the following headings, with some exceptions.

STANDARD STATEMENT

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

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

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.

PATIENT EXPECTATION

The outcomes that the patient 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The College respectfully acknowledges the content taken and adapted from the standards of practice of other regulatory organizations within Alberta and across Canada.

Some of the language and content used in the standards has been adapted from the Federation of Dental Hygiene Regulators of Canada Entry-to-Practice Canadian Competencies for Dental Hygienists and Alberta Health Services policies.