

COLLEGE OF REGISTERED DENTAL HYGIENISTS OF ALBERTA

POLICY REGARDING LEAVING OR CLOSING A DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

When a dental hygienist leaves a “practice in association” arrangement or closes an independent dental hygiene practice, certain obligations arise that must be addressed. This Policy sets out the practices and procedures to be implemented by any dental hygienist who either leaves a “practice in association” arrangement or closes an independent dental hygiene practice in Alberta.

CONTINUITY OF CARE

Dental hygienists have a professional obligation to ensure continuity of client care when leaving a “practice in association” arrangement or closing an independent dental hygiene practice.

The CRDHA Code of Ethics specifically states that a dental hygienist who has undertaken the care of a client in an independent dental hygiene practice shall not discontinue that care without first giving sufficient notice to the client. The dental hygienist must also endeavour to arrange for continuity of care.

A dental hygienist who is leaving a “practice in association” arrangement or closing an independent dental hygiene practice must:

- (a) provide reasonable notice to clients who have an expectation of ongoing care;
- (b) continue to provide professional services until the expiration of the reasonable notice period; and
- (c) take reasonable steps to assist the client with respect to continuity of care, which may include:
 - (i) transferring the client to another dental hygienist or dentist at the same practice;
 - (ii) referring the client to a dental hygienist or dentist at another practice; and
 - (iii) providing information about other dental hygienists or dentists in the area.

Special considerations can arise when a dental hygienist leaves one practice and moves to another practice. While dental hygienists practicing in association with another regulated health professional must take care to avoid breaching the terms of any business agreement they may have signed, it is important to note that clients have a right to choose their dental hygienist and to access their treatment records. The CRDHA encourages dental hygienists to proactively address these issues so that all parties’ obligations are clear at the outset of any business relationship.

MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS

Client Records

Pursuant to the CRDHA Practice Standards, dental hygienists must retain client records for a minimum of 10 years following the date of the last service provided. If the client is a minor, records must be kept until the client is 20 years old or for 10 years, whichever is longer. Client records must be secured and disposed of in compliance with Alberta’s *Health Information Act*. The dental hygienist must also ensure

that the client understand how to access his or her client records when the dental hygienist leaves or closes a practice.

A dental hygienist who leaves a “practice in association” arrangement is responsible for the secure storage and disposition of his or her client records. This can be accomplished by:

- (a) taking client records or copies when leaving the practice; or
- (b) having an agreement with the record custodian that the custodian will maintain the records for the required period of time and provide access to the dental hygienist and/or the client as required.

A dental hygienist who closes an independent dental hygiene practice is responsible for the secure storage and disposition of his or her client records. This can be accomplished by:

- (a) taking client records or copies when closing the practice; or
- (b) entering into an agreement with an information manager in accordance with section 66 of the *Health Information Act*.

Business and Personnel Records

Business records must be retained and disposed of in compliance with requirements of the Canada Revenue Agency. Personnel (employee) records must be secured and disposed of in compliance with the *Personal Information Protection Act*.

MEDICATIONS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

A dental hygienist who closes an independent dental hygiene practice must dispose of medications, equipment and supplies in a safe manner and in compliance with federal, provincial, and local requirements for such disposal.

A dental hygienist who sells, leases, transfers, lends or removes his or her designated radiation equipment must do so in compliance with Alberta’s *Radiation Protection Regulation*.

NOTICE TO THE CRDHA

A dental hygienist must notify the CRDHA in writing of a practice closure no less than 30 days in advance of the practice closure.

The dental hygienist must provide the CRDHA with information about the steps that have been taken to comply with this Policy including but not limited to information about:

- (a) the reasonable notice provided to clients;
- (b) the steps taken to ensure continuity of care;
- (c) the location and disposition of client records;
- (d) the manner in which clients may access their records;
- (e) the disposal of any medications, equipment and supplies; and
- (f) any other matter relevant to the practice closure as may be requested by the CRDHA.

The dental hygienist must provide the CRDHA with the dental hygienist's forwarding mailing address and contact information.

SELLING AN INTEREST IN A DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTICE

The considerations identified above apply equally to the sale of any interest in a dental hygiene practice. In particular, dental hygienists selling an interest in a practice must ensure that they have properly addressed continuity of care, management of records and medication, equipment and supplies and that they have provided notice to the CRDHA in accordance with this Policy. The CRDHA recommends that where appropriate, these issues be addressed in a written purchase and sale agreement.