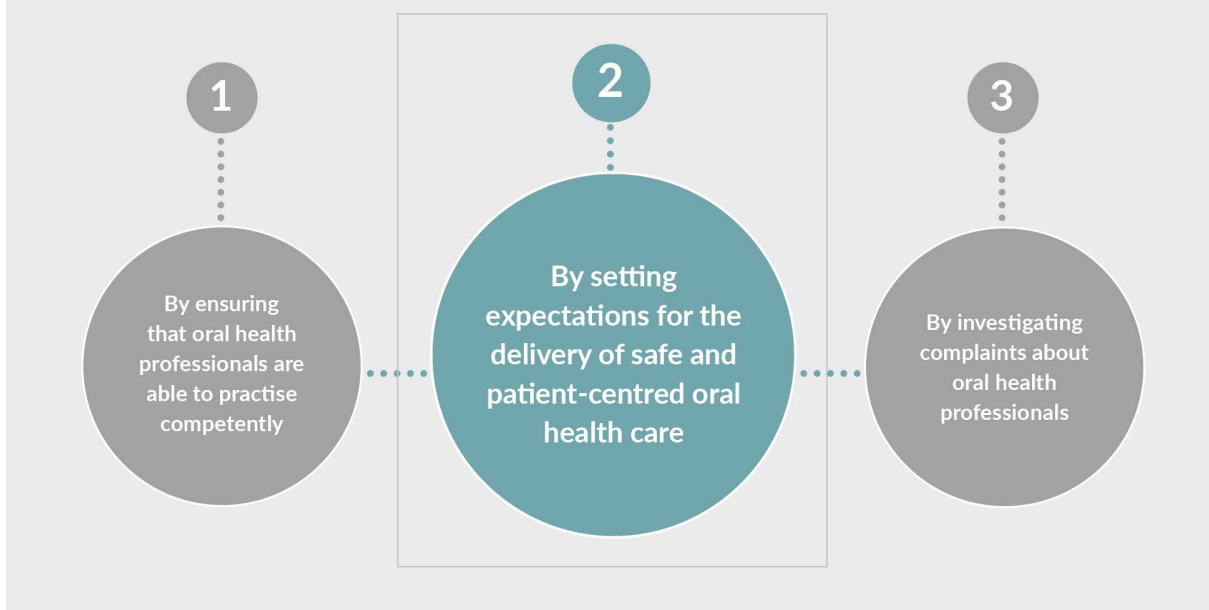


Expectations for clinical and ethical practice

Interpretation Guidelines: Marketing

Applies to Dental Hygienists

There are three main ways that the BC College of Oral Health Professionals protects the public:



The British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP) was created on September 1, 2022 through the amalgamation of four health regulatory colleges: the College of Dental Hygienists of BC, the College of Dental Surgeons of BC, the College of Dental Technicians of BC, and the College of Denturists of BC. All current requirements for standards of clinical and ethical practice issued by the four colleges remain in place upon amalgamation. This document was created by the College of Dental Hygienists of British Columbia and will be updated to reflect the amalgamation.

Marketing

May 5, 2020 Update: The CDHBC Interpretation Guidelines are under review. The content of these guidelines remains in place at this time; however, they need to be applied in the context of the new Dental Hygienists Regulation and CDHBC Bylaws. Readers are welcome to contact the CDHBC office if they have questions about the application of these guidelines in the interim time.

PURPOSE

To provide guidance for appropriate marketing and advertising publications from registrants promoting their dental hygiene practice, as an adjunct to the marketing regulations set in the [CDHBC Bylaws](#).

BACKGROUND

In its duty to protect the public, the CDHBC regulates registrant marketing. Section 69.(2) of the CDHBC Bylaws provides that marketing undertaken by registrants of the College must not be false, inaccurate, reasonably expected to mislead the public, be unverifiable or contrary to the public interest in the profession.

Any statements made in marketing or advertising publications must comply with the [CDHBC Bylaws](#) and [Code of Ethics](#). Of particular importance are Code of Ethics principles 8 and 12 whereby dental hygienists must "uphold the principle that the public should have fair and equitable access to dental hygiene services", and "represent the values and ethics of dental hygiene before others, and maintain the public trust in dental hygienists and their profession."

Dental hygienists must uphold marketing and advertising bylaws and are accountable as individuals to consumer laws.

Marketing includes communication materials presented through mass media for the purpose of promoting professional services. This includes, but is not limited to, promotional materials presented on television, radio, newspaper, pamphlets, business cards, social media, websites and blogs.

Examples of promotional activities or materials that are contrary to the public interest include:

- Group coupon services
- Activities that are to the prejudice of insurers or other payees

POLICY

Registrants will ensure that promotional materials and activities related to their dental hygiene practice and services adhere to the CDHBC Marketing Bylaws.

Fees:

- All clients should be billed the same fees for services provided, regardless of insurance coverage.
- Offering a discount may be acceptable if the discount is applied to all qualifying clients of a demographic (e.g. university students, seniors, local sports team) without discriminating between insured and un-insured clients.
- Sliding fees are not permitted.
- When stating fees, the total cost must be transparent and represent the entire service.

Incentives:

- A dental hygienist must not advertise or offer any particular benefit to a client except where:
 - the benefit is available universally to everyone during the stated period that the offer is valid for,
 - all benefits advertised are accurate and objectively verifiable,
 - there are no hidden or misleading restrictions or qualifications required to take advantage of the offer, and
 - providing the incentive does not compromise individualized client care.
- Group coupon services are not permitted if the agency is receiving a share of the cost of the coupon (e.g. Groupon, Couvon, etc).

Endorsements and Guarantees:

- Refrain from endorsing products and/or referencing drugs within an advertisement.
- Ensure cost comparisons are factual and provide supportive evidence.
- Treatment outcomes (e.g. "tooth whitening - 20 shades brighter") may not be guaranteed as the advertised treatment may not be suitable for all clients and may in some cases be contraindicated or unnecessary. All treatment should reflect individualized client care.
- Avoid misleading and subjective wording (e.g. "gentle," "painless," "affordable").
- Comparative statements that would compare the quality of services with another dental hygienist or allied health professional must not be made.

General:

- Do not advertise services that are not within the dental hygiene scope of practice (e.g. promoting or advising on nutritional supplements, provision of nightguards, etc).
- Avoid the use of the term "dental examination" unless there is a dentist onsite, as this could imply that the dental hygienist will provide a caries diagnosis.
- In all professional advertisements, registrants may only use the name with which they are registered with the CDHBC.
- The CDHBC logo may not be used by registrants in advertising.

- The titles "specialist," "certified," "expert" or any similar term that suggests a special status or certification may not be used by a dental hygienist in advertising.
- Avoid advertising the provision of "treatment packages" unless the treatment included is clearly defined (e.g. the maximum units of treatment that will be provided before additional costs are incurred). "Treatment packages" should also be accompanied by a disclaimer which states that treatment is subject to individualized client care.
- An advertisement must not disclose the name or identifying features of a client unless the client's prior consent has been obtained. Any enticement or benefit given to the client for consenting to this disclosure must be stated in the advertisement. Registrants who use client testimonials in advertising should use caution as the registrant is responsible for the content of the testimonial.
- When providing an explanation of services, registrants are encouraged to use terminology provided in the BCDHA Fee Guide in order to eliminate confusion and interpretation of services between registrants.
- All advertising and promotional material must be retained for a minimum period of 1 year after the date of publication or broadcast.
- Further details can be found in the [Marketing FAQs document](#)

REFERENCE

- Advertising Guideline. Toronto: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario; 2013. Available from:
[CDHO Guideline \(pdf\)](#)
- Bylaws of the College of Dental Surgeons of BC. Part 12 - Promotional Activities. Vancouver: College of Dental Surgeons of BC; 2009. Available from:
CDSBC Bylaws 2012 (pdf)
- CRDHA Rules Respecting Advertising. Edmonton: College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta; 2008. Available from:
[CRDHA Rules Respecting Advertising \(pdf\)](#)
- Guidelines for Promotional Activities. Vancouver: College of Dental Surgeons of BC. Available from:
[CDSBC Guidelines for Promotional Activities \(pdf\)](#)
- Dental Hygienists Regulation and Bylaws. Victoria: College of Dental Hygienists of BC; 2013.
- CDHBC Code of Ethics. Victoria: College of Dental Hygienists of BC; 2013.

Permission received for use of partial content from CDHO and CRDHA May 2014

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