

Expectations for clinical and ethical practice

Legacy Dental Hygienist Code of Ethics

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 BC and will be updated to reflect the amalgamation.

Code of Ethics

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide general statements of the principles of ethical conduct, and an explanation, so that Registered Dental Hygienists may fulfill their duty to the public and to their profession. The italicized paragraphs below each statement are not part of the bylaws but have been developed to increase understanding of the statements.

The Code

Registered Dental Hygienists shall act with courtesy and good faith towards clients, colleagues and others, and with fidelity to the public. They shall uphold the values of respect, honesty, kindness and fairness. In keeping with these basic principles, Registered Dental Hygienists shall:

1. Hold paramount the health and welfare of those served professionally;

The dental hygienist is committed to the care and best interests of clients.

2. Provide competent and appropriate care to clients;

The dental hygienist provides dental hygiene services in a legal and safe environment utilizing current knowledge and skills. The standards of dental hygiene services are consistent with professional practice as outlined in provincial and national standards. The dental hygienist holds the appropriate class of registration for the dental hygiene services they are providing.

3. Practice the principle of confidentiality;

The dental hygienist provides dental hygiene services with consideration for the privacy of the client and maintains confidentiality of client records. The dental hygienist obtains the permission of the client to consult or confer with other health care professionals. The dental hygienist conforms to the confidentiality and privacy provisions contained in provincial legislation, including the Public Health Act, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Personal Information Protection Act, and the Health Professions Act.

4. Treat clients with respect for their individual needs and values;

The dental hygienist acknowledges the diverse needs of clients and uses a consultative approach to dental hygiene services. The dental hygienist is sensitive to but not prejudiced by factors such as the client's race, religion, gender, age, ethnic origin, social or marital status,

sexual orientation, or health status.

5. Regard the clients' rights to control their own care;

The dental hygienist identifies the client's oral health care priority and encourages the client to become an active participant in their care. The dental hygienist informs the client about available health care in a clear manner and helps the client to make informed choices about their best interests. Together the dental hygienist and client agree on the desired oral health goals.

6. Inform clients of the dental hygiene care available to them, clearly advise them of probable consequences of not following recommended action, but respect the client's right of informed choice;

The dental hygienist explains the potential outcomes of not following the recommended treatment choice, but does not make judgments regarding the choices made by the client.

7. Recognize the expertise and contribution of colleagues and other disciplines as essential to excellent client care;

The dental hygienist accepts the responsibility to work as a member of a team with other colleagues and health professionals to promote safe and effective care for the client. The dental hygienist asks for consultations and/or referrals when it is appropriate.

8. Uphold the principle that the public should have fair and equitable access to dental hygiene services;

The dental hygienist promotes oral health care and access to dental hygiene services for all individuals. The dental hygienist avoids discriminatory practices and behaviours.

9. Maintain a high level of skill by participating in programs of continued study to update and advance their body of knowledge;

The dental hygienist is conscious of the changes in research, technology and clinical practice. The dental hygienist is committed to meeting the diverse needs of the client and is responsible for maintaining currency and competency. Self-evaluation and continuing study is the obligation of the individual dental hygienist.

10. Report to their licensing body or other appropriate agencies any illegal or unethical professional decisions or practices by dental hygienists, or others.

The dental hygienist is committed to safe and ethical care for clients. A dental hygienist who suspects incompetence or unethical conduct by a dental hygienist will report the behaviour to the College of Dental Hygienists of B.C. A dental hygienist who believes the behaviour by another is not in the best interest of the client or public will report it to the appropriate agency. It is required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse.

- 11. Avoid a conflict of interest in carrying out professional duties, but where such conflict arises, fully disclose the circumstances without delay to the client or appropriate agency;**

The dental hygienist acts in the best interest of the client and does not place their own interests ahead of the public. When the dental hygienist feels their interests may prevail over the interests of the client/public, the dental hygienist is obligated to declare a conflict of interest and may refer the client to another dental hygienist.

- 12. Represent the values and ethics of dental hygiene before others, and maintain the public trust in dental hygienists and their profession;**

The dental hygienist accurately represents their competency, education, experience and class of registration to the public. The dental hygienist respects the profession of dental hygiene and the trust the public has placed in that profession. The dental hygienist values the client-hygienist relationship and practices in a conscientious manner.