



**College of Alberta
Dental Assistants**

Code of Ethics

Effective June 1, 2020

This Code of Ethics was approved and adopted by the Council of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants June 1, 2020.

CADA Code of Ethics: Preamble Statement

Introduction

The Code of Ethics was developed by the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (the College) in consultation with Dental Assistants in Alberta under the authority of the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) and the College Bylaws.

The Code of Ethics supports the College Mission, Vision and Values and provides a framework for dental assistants' safe, competent and ethical practice. The HPA states that the College must establish, maintain and enforce a Code of Ethics.

The Code of Ethics applies to Dental Assistants on the General, Provisional and Courtesy registers.

There may be overlap with some statements because ethical principles apply in a variety of situations and need to be considered within each relevant context.

Guiding Principles

The foundation of the Code of Ethics is the Mission, Vision and Values developed by Council.

Mission

The College of Alberta Dental Assistants regulates its members in the public interest, promoting the delivery of safe, quality oral health care.

Vision

We champion regulatory excellence, innovation, and trust among our communities.

Values

Accountable [taking responsibility for the work we do]

We deliver an effective regulatory framework and answer to Albertans.

Ethical [acting with personal and professional integrity]

We do the right things for the right reasons.

Inclusive [honouring human diversity]

We embrace equality in the delivery of our mandate and encourage differing perspectives in decision-making.

Innovative [leading by learning]

We pursue opportunities to collaborate, grow, and improve our systems and processes.

Purpose of the Code of Ethics

As a member of a self-regulated profession, each individual Dental Assistant is accountable for practicing in accordance with the Code of Ethics regardless of role, practice area or practice setting.

The Code of Ethics provides guidance:

- for each Dental Assistant to reflect on their own practice and ethical conduct;
- for the College to assess the ethical conduct of Dental Assistants; and,
- for the public to understand the responsibility and accountability of Dental Assistants.

An ethical decision-making framework is provided as an appendix to this document.

Development

The Code of Ethics was developed by the Council of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants. Dental Assistants in Alberta were invited to provide feedback throughout the consultation process. The Minister and stakeholders also provided comments and suggestions. Prior to final approval, Council considered all feedback received.

Professional Conduct

Dental Assistants must adhere to all applicable legislation including the HPA, *Health Information Act* (HIA), occupational health and safety legislation, the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation* and any other relevant laws.

The Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics must also be followed. Failure to comply with these documents may be unprofessional conduct as defined in the HPA and may result in discipline proceedings.

Practice of a Dental Assistant

Dental Assistants are regulated professionals with a diverse knowledge base. Each one is accountable for their own practice regardless of direction or delegation of duties, practice role or practice setting.

Dental Assistants communicate effectively and collaborate with all members of the health care team in the delivery of patient-centred care. Dental Assistants are educated professionals who maintain and enhance professional competence through self-assessment and life-long learning.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Ethics:

Advocate

Actively support a person, cause, idea or policy.

Affiliate

In the HIA, a person employed by a custodian (e.g. dentist, denturist, dental hygienist) who collects, discloses and uses information on behalf of and at the direction of the custodian.

Conflict of Interest

Anything that creates a risk of professional judgment or actions regarding the health and welfare of the patient being influenced or superseded by a secondary interest that may not be solely for the patient's benefit.

Consent

Confirmation by the patient that the treatment or procedure has been explained, including reasons for treatment, benefits, risks and alternatives and the patient understands the choice they are making either to proceed with treatment or to refuse treatment.

Consent must be obtained by the prescribing healthcare professional and confirmed by the Dental Assistant prior to providing services.

When a patient has significant questions about treatments or services OR the patient advises the Dental Assistant that they want to amend or withdraw consent, the Dental Assistant shall not proceed with the prescribed treatment or services and must advise the prescribing healthcare professional before taking further steps.

Dental Assistant

A regulated member of the College on the General, Provisional or Courtesy Register.

Vulnerable

A person in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

Code of Ethics

1.0 Dental Assistants and Patients

1.1 Generally

- a) The health and well-being of the patient is the priority in all professional interactions.
- b) Dental Assistants:
 - i. take professional responsibility for all professional actions;
 - ii. engage in best practices;
 - iii. competently apply knowledge and skills to avoid causing harm;
 - iv. if harm occurs, disclose the issue to the patient and supervisor as soon as practicable and take appropriate steps to minimize the harm; and,
 - v. evaluate processes to prevent recurrence.
- c) Dental Assistants are knowledgeable of and practice to the current standard of care, seeking sound scientific information to support practice decisions. The current standard of care encompasses, but is not limited to, patient autonomy, current infection prevention and control procedures, occupational health and safety requirements and evidence-based use of appropriate procedures and materials.
- d) Services are provided without bias or discrimination and communications are respectful and truthful.

1.2 Privacy

Dental Assistants hold patient information in confidence. Comply with all applicable privacy legislation including the *Health Information Act* (HIA) and the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). As an Affiliate under the HIA, collect, access, disclose and use patient information only for the purposes authorized under the HIA and in accordance with the Custodian's policies and procedures.

1.3 Informed Consent

Dental Assistants respect the patient's right to choose and therefore confirm informed consent is given by the patient prior to providing services, recognizing the patient's right to withdraw consent at any time.

1.4 Provision of Services

- a) Dental Assistants are responsible for their own professional practice while working under the direction of another health professional regardless of role, practice area or practice setting. Working under the direction of an authorized dental health professional, provide only those services authorized by legislation and currently competent to perform. The services provided are those appropriate to the diagnosis, prescribed treatment plan, patient consent and specific circumstances.

- b) Dental Assistants will seek assistance with any services they are not currently competent to perform, including referral to another health care professional who is authorized and competent to provide the necessary care.

1.5 Professional Boundaries

- a) Dental Assistants maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid inappropriate personal relationships in accordance with Standard of Practice #4, Professional Boundaries.
- b) Professional boundaries clearly separate personal/social relationships from the professional/patient relationship.
- c) Dental Assistants will not allow self-interest of any kind to influence care of the patient.

2.0 Dental Assistants and the Community

2.1 Representation of Professional Qualifications

Dental Assistants represent qualifications honestly and accurately, using the protected titles of “registered dental assistant”, “RDA”, “dental assistant” or “DA” only as authorized.

2.2 Health Promotion

Dental Assistants:

- a) advocate on behalf of patients including vulnerable populations; and,
- b) support oral health initiatives to improve oral health knowledge and awareness in the community.

3.0 Dental Assistants and the Profession

3.1 Accountability

Dental Assistants:

- a) accept responsibility for decisions and behaviours.
- b) know and comply with the legislation applicable to the dental assisting profession and the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and policies and guidelines of the College.

3.2 Conflict of Interest

Dental Assistants:

- a) recognize and, where possible, avoid conflicts of interest; and,
- b) if a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, take appropriate steps to mitigate the conflict in the patient’s interest.

3.3 Professional Development

Dental Assistants participate in professional activities that support and enhance their ability to provide safe, competent services meeting the current standard of care.

3.4 Professional Communication

Dental Assistants:

- a) are knowledgeable, professional, respectful and timely in their communications; and,
- b) demonstrate professional decorum including appropriate use of social media.

4.0 Dental Assistants and the Health Care Team

4.1 Communication and Collaboration

Dental Assistants:

- a) develop and maintain positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and other health care professionals;
- b) inform colleagues and other professionals about the dental assistant's role and capabilities. Share accurate, evidence-based information with colleagues to promote best practices in patient oral health care;
- c) respect the expertise of colleagues and willingly share expertise and knowledge as appropriate; and,
- d) work with colleagues and employers to create safe and healthy working conditions.

4.2 Professionalism

Dental Assistants:

- a) participate willingly and meaningfully with regulators when requested, reporting unprofessional conduct by colleagues and other professionals to the appropriate regulator and self-reporting decisions about or against themselves as required in the *Health Professions Act*;
- b) acknowledge colleagues' roles and contributions to the inter-professional team; and,
- c) commit to actions that ensure support for colleagues in achieving best practices in oral health care and optimal outcomes for patients.

5.0 Dental Assistants Personally

5.1 Maintaining Competence

Dental Assistants:

- a) recognize, acknowledge and function within personal competence level and authorized practice. Accept responsibility for knowing and acting consistently within the legislation, standards and principles that pertain to the profession and to the practice setting;
- b) are responsible for maintaining their own competence;
- c) participate in meaningful learning opportunities that enhance and improve competencies and professional practice; and,
- d) accept and act on constructive feedback and/or criticism to improve practice.

5.2 Fitness to Practice

Dental Assistants:

- a) engage in self-care to maintain the physical and mental wellness required to meet the responsibilities of role; and,
- b) inform the Registrar and employer immediately if unable to practice safely, competently and/or ethically.

6.0 Dental Assistants and the College

6.1 Compliance

Dental Assistants comply with College Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, bylaws, and policies and procedures as well as with the legislation and regulations that apply to the profession.

6.2 Participation

Dental Assistants:

- a) support the advancement of the dental assisting profession for current and future generations of dental assistants through giving back to the profession by volunteering and contributing time, skill, talent and expertise throughout career whether formally or informally;
 - b) participate in the affairs of the College in a responsible, professional and meaningful way; and,
 - c) communicate with the College and stakeholders in a professional and timely manner.
- Correspondence, communications and requests from the College and/or other stakeholders are given timely attention and appropriate professional response.

Resources

- [Health Professions Act](#)
- [Dental Assistants Profession Regulation](#)
- [Standards of Practice](#)
- [Competency Profile](#)

Ethical Decision-Making Framework

Ethical challenges arise in a variety of contexts and require careful reflection and analysis to determine the best decision or course of action under the circumstances. Ethical decisions should not be rushed but should be made carefully after considering all relevant factors and perspectives.

1. Collect information to identify the issue.

- a) What is the issue?
- b) Who does the issue impact and how? What is their view of the situation?
- c) What ethical principles are at stake?
- d) What legislation, policy or regulation is involved?
- e) Who needs to be involved in the decision-making process?

2. Determine feasible alternatives.

- a) Identify alternatives for dealing with the issue.
- b) What makes each a good alternative? What are the drawbacks of each alternative?
- c) Identify morally significant factors for each alternative.
- d) If you were one of the principle people affected by the alternative chosen, which alternative would you want?
- e) Which alternative will provide the best outcome for the patient?

3. Propose and test possible solutions.

- a) What is the impact on the patient? The public? Colleagues? Who else would be impacted and how?
- b) What is the impact on systems, protocols and procedures?
- c) Would a good person make this choice?
- d) Does it feel right?

4. Make your choice.

- a) Choose the solution which provides the best possible outcomes, considering all the information you have.
- b) Accept responsibility for your decision. Learn from it.
- c) Would you do the same thing again? Why? Why not?
- d) Could a better outcome have been achieved? How?
- e) Do policies, procedures or practices need to be revised? Who will do it?