

Chapter 3

Registration & Practice Permits

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Registration Requirements

Under the *Health Professions Act (HPA)*, the College of Dietitians of Alberta (the College) has the legislated responsibility to establish, maintain and enforce standards for registration and licensing of its members (1). In meeting this responsibility, the College establishes the education and training that are required for entry into the profession. Registration with the College assures the public and employers that an individual has met the standards for academic and practical experience required for the practice of the profession of dietetics.

The health profession legislation of each province has different requirements regarding registration of practitioners with their applicable regulatory college. It is the responsibility of each professional to ensure that they meet the registration requirements of the applicable regulatory body in each and every provincial jurisdiction in which they may wish to work prior to beginning to practice.

KEY PRACTICE POINT

It is the responsibility of each professional to ensure that they meet the registration requirements of the applicable regulatory body in each and every provincial jurisdiction in which they wish to work PRIOR to beginning to practice.

Routes of Entry

The *HPA* sets out the basic process for registration with colleges. However, the specific requirements that must be met for registration for a profession are included in the regulation of that specific profession. Registration requirements for the profession of dietetics are set out in the *Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists Profession Regulation*. The three routes of entry are described below (2).

Standard Route: The standard route of entry requires that an individual has obtained the combination of education and experience established by the profession. These requirements are typically met through the following:

- Completion of a Bachelor's Degree in foods and nutrition and graduation from a dietetic internship
- Completion of a Masters or Doctoral Degree and demonstration of meeting competency standards for graduate students approved by Council

Labour Mobility Agreement Route: Individuals may also be registered if they come from another jurisdiction (or province) with equivalent standards for the registration of dietitians. In Canada, these jurisdictions are recognized under the Labour Mobility Agreement that the College has established with other provincial dietetic regulators.

Substantial Equivalent Route: Individuals may also be registered if they are able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Registration Committee of the College, that their acquired education and experience are substantially equivalent to the registration requirements. Generally this involves the use of a variety of prior learning assessment strategies and tools.

Registration Examination

Candidates for registration are also required to pass the registration examination approved by the College. This examination confirms that candidates have the required level of competence to practice.

Current Practice

Candidates for registration must establish that their qualifications for registration are current within three years prior to their application for registration. Otherwise, they will be required to undertake academic and / or experiential upgrading.

Good Character and Reputation

The College Regulation requires that every applicant for registration or renewal of a practice permit provide evidence of good character and reputation. This involves a declaration that

information provided to the College is complete and accurate, that the applicant has not been disciplined by another profession or in another jurisdiction and has not been charged with or convicted of a criminal offence. If this declaration cannot be made, the application is referred to the Registration Committee to determine whether the public would be at risk and if a permit will be issued.

A current Criminal Record Check is a requirement of every applicant to the College.

Omitting or misrepresenting information to the College is a serious matter and may result in registration being refused or a practice permit being suspended or cancelled.

Liability Insurance

Errors and Omissions (E&O), also known as professional liability or malpractice insurance in the health industry, covers liability arising out of negligent acts in rendering, or failing to render, professional services. Professionals are defined as people who hold themselves out as having special skills, knowledge or experiences. Registered health providers, including Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists, are professionals. If one provides a service or advice based on these special skills, knowledge or education, then one has exposure to errors & emissions. If one does not have E&O insurance, the defense and settlement costs could bankrupt an individual. Therefore, the most obvious reason for carrying E&O insurance is to cover the costs associated with legal proceedings and legal representation arising from complaints brought against the individual.

College policy states all practicing registrants must carry professional liability insurance, either employer provided or third-party, of an amount not less than two million dollars per occurrence. Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists must submit proof of insurance to the College upon request. Members of the College may purchase professional liability insurance directly through the College program or through another provider (such as Dietitians of Canada).

The Two Purposes of Professional Liability Insurance

Protecting the Public: Professional Liability Insurance provides financial compensation for the public in the event of damages caused by a Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutritionist. Clients need to know they have recourse in the event of harm. Knowing that they can access a professional's insurance, by way of a claim or law suit against a professional's liability insurance provides them with a sense of security when they seek treatment.

Protecting the Registered Dietitian or Registered Nutritionist: Professional Liability Insurance protects Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists from having to pay personally for any harm that clients suffer as a result of conduct. If a Dietitian does not have insurance and is successfully sued for negligence, that Dietitian will be personally liable for any damages awarded to the client. Even in the cases where the Dietitian is found not to have been negligent, the Dietitian will still have to finance the cost of defense.

Jurisprudence Learning Module

Jurisprudence is defined as the science or philosophy of law. In the context of dietetics, it is the provincial legislation in combination with the College of Dietitians of Alberta's legislation, regulations and standards of practice that govern practice in Alberta.

All new registrants to the College are required to successfully complete the College's online Jurisprudence learning module, based on the content found within this handbook, within their first year of registration, prior to registration renewal. Thereafter, every member on the General Register will be required to complete the learning module every five years to maintain registration with the College.

Mandatory Registration

In Alberta, the *HPA* creates a uniform, mandatory requirement to register with the applicable college if certain circumstances exist. Section 46(1) states the following:

“A person must apply for registration if the person

- a) is qualified to meet the requirements of section 28(2) for registration as a regulated member, and
- b) intends to provide any or all of the following:
 - i. professional services directly to the public
 - ii. the manufacture of dental appliances or conducting of laboratory tests that are used by other regulated members to provide professional services directly to the public;
 - iii. food and nutrition professional services that are used by other regulated members and individuals to provide services directly to the public;
 - iv. the teaching of the practice of a regulated profession to regulated members or students of the regulated profession;
 - v. the supervision of regulated members who provide professional services to the public”¹⁰

In plain language, the *HPA* requires individuals who meet the requirements to be a member of a profession and who are working in the profession as outlined by the practice statement for that profession to be registered. By law, a person with the required educational requirements to practice dietetics must apply for registration with the College if they intend to:

¹⁰ Province of Alberta. *Health Professions Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. H-7.

- provide professional services directly to the public
- provide professional services that are used by other regulated members and individuals to provide services directly to the public
- teach the practice of the profession to members of the College or to students of the profession, or
- supervise members of the College who provide professional services to the public.

If the Registrar is of the opinion that a person who is not a regulated member of the College meets the requirements to practice dietetics and is providing dietetic services, the Registrar may give that person a written request to apply for registration. A person who meets the requirements to practice dietetics and does not comply with the request to apply for registration is guilty of an offence and may be subject to a fine and possible imprisonment.

KEY PRACTICE POINT

Individuals who meet the requirements to be a member of a profession and who are working in the profession as outlined by the practice statement of that profession MUST be registered.

If a member is aware of an individual who meets the criteria to practice dietetics in Alberta, whose work falls within the practice statements of the profession and who they believe may not be registered with the College of Dietitians of Alberta, it is their responsibility to report this information to the College.

The *HPA* also prohibits anyone from knowingly employing a person who is required to be registered under the *HPA* and is not registered.

Practice Permits

In order to practice as a Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutritionist in Alberta, an individual must apply for and be granted registration with the applicable regulatory college. Following registration, an individual is issued a practice permit. In Alberta, the practice permit is a license to practice dietetics and use the protected titles of the College. An individual cannot practice or use the protected titles of the College without a practice permit. The practice permit registration fee is tax deductible. The College issues a practice permit and income tax receipt online to regulated members each year. Members will not receive a Practice Permit and Official Tax Receipt in the mail from the College office. The permit indicates the following:

KEY PRACTICE POINT

An individual cannot practice or use the protected titles of the College without a practice permit.

- the name of the College and the fact that the permit is issued under the *HPA*
- the member's name and unique registration number,
- the register category the member is on

- any conditions on the member's practice permit
- whether the member provides any restricted activities, and
- the expiry date of the permit

The *HPA* states that a member's practice permit must be on display where the member provides services or that the regulated member makes the practice permit available for inspection upon request of employers and the public. The *HPA* also requires that employers be notified when a practice permit is suspended or issued with conditions.

Practice Permit Renewal

Regardless of the time of year a practice permit is issued to an individual, the permit expires every year on March 31. For example, if an individual became registered with the College in September and was placed on the General Register, they would be able to practice as soon as they received their electronic practice permit. The following March, they would be required to complete the College renewal process prior to the close of business March 31st. As per the *HPA*, if a complete application for renewal of a practice permit is not received by March 31, the practice permit is automatically suspended, the member cannot practice and their employer will be notified. There is also a late renewal penalty fee.

KEY PRACTICE POINT

Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists are responsible to ensure that registration renewal is complete prior to March 31 each year; failure to do so will result in the automatic suspension of the practice permit. Members without a valid practice permit CANNOT practice.

College Registers

In Alberta, when an individual is "registered" as a member of a profession, their name is officially recorded or enrolled on a register. The "register" contains the names of individuals who have met defined requirements (completed specified academic studies, internships, examinations, etc.) and who are legally able to practice their profession in Alberta. The College is responsible for ensuring that only individuals who meet all of the requirements for registration have their names placed on the register. In Alberta, using the term "registered", as in "Registered Dietitian / Registered Nutritionist (RD)" informs colleagues, clients and the public that an individual has completed the appropriate academic studies, passed all required examinations, has the required knowledge and skills to practice competently, and is registered with the College.

The three registers (lists of members who have met specific registration criteria) maintained by the College are as follows:

General Register

Individuals who have met all the criteria for registration are entered into the General Register. The General Register also identifies members who are authorized to perform restricted activities and the restricted activities each member is authorized to perform. Members on the General Register have the right to use all the protected titles of the College (Registered Dietitian, Registered Nutritionist, RD and Dietitian).

Temporary Register

The Temporary Register is for applicants who have met academic and practical training requirements (internships) but who have not yet written the registration examination approved by the College or are awaiting their examination results. This category of registration expires eight weeks after the date of the registration examination. Upon notification of passing the registration examination, the College provides information as to what steps must be taken to transfer status from being on the Temporary Register to being entered on the General Register.

While waiting to write the national examination or waiting for their examination results, individuals who are on the Temporary Register of the College are able to practice as a dietitian under the supervision of a Registered Dietitian or Registered Nutritionist. This supervision entails regular weekly communication with the supervisor to review practice, practice based issues and activities that have been undertaken. Practice is reviewed and the “temporary registrant” is encouraged to seek advice regarding practice based issues and activities.

An individual who holds a temporary practice permit may use the protected title “Dietitian”. They cannot use the term “Registered”, nor can they use the initials “RD”. A “temporary registrant” is a regulated member of the College and is accountable to and responsible for their clients and the quality of the health care services they provide. They are also accountable to the College, their professional peers, their employer and their supervisor.

Courtesy Register

In addition to the General and Temporary Registers, there is also a Courtesy Register for dietitians registered in another jurisdiction recognized by Council, who wish to practice in Alberta on a temporary basis. The practice scope of individuals registered on the Courtesy Register is limited to the specific purpose for which the registration is granted and is time limited. Individuals on this register may use all the protected titles of the College.

Member Information Required in College Registers

The College has a responsibility to keep members and employers informed of changes to regulation or other issues that impact practice. The College is also required to provide current information to the Government and the public. In meeting these responsibilities it is

imperative that the College maintain accurate, current information about each member listed in the Registers. The *HPA* and the *Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutrition Profession Regulation* outline the information that College Registers must include for each member.

Section 33(3) of the *HPA* states the following:

“The registrar must enter the following information for each regulated member in the appropriate category of register established under subsection (1)(a):

- (a) the full name of the member;
- (b) the member’s unique registration number;
- (b.1) whether the member’s registration is restricted to a period of time and, if so, the period of time;
- (c) any conditions imposed on the member’s practice permit;
- (d) the status of the member’s practice permit, including whether it is suspended or cancelled;
- (e) the member’s practice specialization recognized by the college;
- (f) whether the member is authorized to provide a restricted activity not normally provided by regulated members of the college;
- (g) whether the member is not authorized to provide a restricted activity that is normally provided by regulated members of the college;”¹¹

Information that is required in accordance with legislation is requested on applications for registration or renewal of a practice permit. Section 26(1) of the Regulation also requires that members advise the Registrar of any changes to any of the information they give the College including any change to their name, home or work address, employer or practice information (2).

A member’s file consists of official documents; verification is required in order to make appropriate changes to records. All notifications of changes must be made in writing, signed and mailed or faxed to the College. Name changes must be also be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation. Members may access their own information by logging onto the Online Profile page to ensure that it is correct. To facilitate member updates to their information, members have access to the Online Profile throughout the year.

KEY PRACTICE POINT

Each Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutritionist is responsible for ensuring the College has accurate and current information for their member file.

¹¹ Province of Alberta. *Health Professions Act*, R.S.A. 2000. c. H-7.

It is imperative that members provide information that is complete and accurate. Refusal to supply information, intentional omission, or misrepresentation of any information to the College constitutes unprofessional conduct.

Registering in Another Province

The Labor Mobility Agreement is an agreement between provincial regulatory bodies in Canada that is based on common requirements for registration and competence. Registration is based on verification of the member's registration in good standing with one of the parties to the Agreement, along with the completion of an application form, payment of fees and meeting any requirements such as criminal record checks that are unique to that province. The Agreement does not apply to non-regulated categories of members.

It is very important that a member maintain their registration with their current regulatory body if planning a move to another province. Registration with a regulatory body must be maintained in order to have access to registration under the Labour Mobility Agreement.

All dietetic regulatory bodies in Canada are part of the Labour Mobility Agreement. Dietitians of Canada is not part of the Agreement because it is not a regulatory body.

Resigning from the College

Members who are no longer in dietetic practice or no longer wish to maintain their registration status can resign in good standing by completing the resignation section of the online practice permit renewal form and by informing the Registrar in writing prior to March 31 that they are resigning from the College. Members who resign may no longer practice dietetics or use the protected titles of the College.

Members who resign from the College and wish to reapply for registration at a future date must meet all registration criteria in place at the time of the application, including examination and current practice requirements.

Reciprocity Agreements

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) and nine of the ten provincial dietetic regulatory bodies of Canada, have entered into a Charter to mutually recognize dietitians who are registered or credentialed in Australia and Canada. The exception is the Province of Quebec.

The Mutual Recognition Voluntary Relationship Charter will only apply to dietitians with full Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) status (Australia) and/or Registered Dietitians in Canada who hold a current General or Full Certificate of Registration and who have practiced as a dietitian for at least twelve months (Canada).

Chapter Summary

Under the *Health Professions Act (HPA)*, the College of Dietitians of Alberta (the College) has the legislated responsibility to establish, maintain and enforce standards for registration and licensing of its members. Professionals must ensure that they meet the registration requirements of the applicable regulatory body in each and every provincial jurisdiction in which they wish to work prior to beginning to practice. It is mandatory that individuals who meet the requirements to be a member of a profession and who are working in the profession as outlined by the practice statement be registered. The practice permit is a license to practice dietetics and use the protected titles of the College. An individual may not practice or use the protected titles of the College without a practice permit. Each Registered Dietitian and Registered Nutritionist in Alberta has a responsibility to ensure that the College has accurate and current information for their member file.

References

1. Province of Alberta. *Health Professions Act*; R.S.A. 2000, c. H-7.
2. Province of Alberta. *Registered Dietitians and Registered Nutritionists Profession Regulation*, 2002.