

Virtual Dietetic Practice

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Authority

Health Professions Act, sections 16(2)(a) and (k)(iii) and CDBC Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

Definitions

- Client: an individual and/or their substitute decision maker, or a group of individuals, with whom a dietitian has an established professional relationship with the intent to deliver dietetic services.
- Virtual Dietetic Practice: provision of dietetic services (e.g. counseling, consultation, monitoring, teaching, etc.) which involves any type of intervention with a client who is remotely located from the dietitian providing the service. It may include telephone, videoconferencing, email, apps, web-based communication and wearable technology (excludes social media and public appearances where advice is provided to the public at large). Virtual dietetic practice can occur within a jurisdiction and across provincial, territorial or national borders.

Background

The duties and objectives for a college legislated under the *Health Professions Act* include superintending the practice and promoting the ability of its registrants to respond and adapt to changes in practice environments and advances in technology such as virtual dietetic practice.

The CDBC is responsible for advising dietitians providing dietetic care in BC to comply with its registration requirements and to get informed about practice requirements if their client resides in BC (e.g., standards of practice, scope of practice, restricted activities and liability insurance).

No provincial dietetic regulatory body in Canada prohibits virtual dietetic practice. However, each regulatory body may identify their own registration requirements and standards specific to virtual dietetic practice to clients residing in their province.

Registration Requirements

In all provinces, dietitians providing “cross-border” in-person dietetic services must be licensed in the province where the client resides. Registration requirements for services provided through virtual dietetic practice vary as indicated in the following table.

Note: the information in the following table only applies to dietitians who are currently fully registered and in good standing with a Canadian dietetic regulatory body. The table information is accurate to the date of publication of this policy and is subject to change. Dietitians are advised to confirm registration requirements in the jurisdiction where the client resides.

Provincial Registration Requirements for Dietitians providing Virtual Care in Canada

Regulatory Body	Required to register in client's province? (Yes or No)	Other Regulatory Requirements
College of Dietitians of British Columbia (CDBC)	Yes	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to BC residents must be registered in BC.
College of Dietitians of Alberta (CDA)	Yes	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to AB residents must be registered in AB.
Saskatchewan Dietitians Association (SDA)	No	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to SK residents must: a. disclose where they are registered to the SK client, b. inform the SDA they are providing virtual dietetic services in SK, and c. become familiar with SK laws, regulations, standards and code of ethics.
College of Dietitians of Manitoba (CDM)	No	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to MB residents must: a. have successfully completed the CDRE, b. contact CDM prior to providing services and c. disclose where they are registered to the MB client.
College of Dietitians of Ontario (CDO)	Yes	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to ON residents must be registered in ON.
Ordre professionnel des diététistes du Québec (OPDQ)	No	If a dietitian is physically located outside of Québec and providing virtual dietetic services to QC residents, the OPDQ advises the dietitian: a. disclose to their client they are not registered as a dietitian in QC, and b. become familiar with QC laws, regulations, standards and guidelines.
New Brunswick Association of Dietitians (NBAD) / Association des diététistes du Nouveau-Brunswick (ADNB)	No	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to NB residents must: a. disclose where they are registered to the NB client, b. inform NBAD prior to providing virtual dietetic services in NB, and c. adhere to NBAD laws, regulations, standards and code of ethics.
Nova Scotia Dietetic Association (NSDA)	No	If a dietitian is physically located outside of Nova Scotia and providing virtual dietetic services to Nova Scotia residents, the NSDA advises the dietitian: a. disclose to their client they are not registered as a dietitian in NS, and b. become familiar with Nova Scotia laws, regulations, standards and guidelines.
Prince Edward Island Dietitians Registration Board (PEIDRB)	Yes	A dietitian registered in another province who provides virtual dietetic services to PEI residents must be registered in PEI.
Newfoundland and Labrador College of Dietitians (NLCD)	No	If a dietitian is physically located outside of NL and providing virtual dietetic services to NL residents, the NLCD advises the dietitian: a. disclose to their client they are not registered as a dietitian in NL, and b. become familiar with NL laws, regulations, standards and guidelines.

Policy

The use of information technology does not alter the ethical, professional and legal requirements around the provision of appropriate nutrition care. Dietitians follow the CDBC Virtual Dietetic Practice Guidelines when they provide virtual dietetic care to clients. In providing nutrition care services, Dietitians engaged in virtual dietetic practice must:

1. Deliver virtual dietetic services in accordance with the CDBC Bylaws and other standards, including but not limited to: Code of Ethics, Marketing bylaws, Standards of Practice, and Standards for Record Keeping, as though the dietetic services were delivered in person.

If Standards of Practice cannot be met virtually, the dietitian must refer the client elsewhere. Dietitians may not exempt themselves from the obligation of complying with the Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics by obtaining releases from or publishing disclaimers to the client.

2. Be aware of and comply with restricted activities in the province where the client resides and each province where the dietitian is registered.
3. Be aware of additional authority mechanisms that must legally be in place for some activities to be carried out in BC and in other jurisdictions (e.g., ordering lab tests and vitamins and minerals).
4. Disclose where they are registered to the client.
5. Ensure professional liability coverage includes virtual dietetic practice within the province of registration as well as other jurisdictions where they provide virtual dietetic services (e.g., Canadian provinces, USA or other countries where client may reside).
6. Deliver competent dietetic practice by assessing their own competence, identifying areas for learning, and addressing knowledge gaps in relation to relevant software and information technology processes needed for effective virtual care.
7. Be satisfied that the standard of care is reasonable and can lead to outcomes that are equivalent to any other type of care that can be delivered to the client, considering the specific context, location, timing and relative availability of in-person care.
8. Have a process to explain benefits and limitations of virtual dietetic care, collect and record informed client consent to virtual services.
9. Have a process to ensure client information confidentiality, access to information and safety of records.
10. Have a process for emergency response to address any health emergencies that may occur during a virtual consultation (must be cross jurisdictional, if applicable).
11. Provide interprofessional practice and have a process to refer the client to other health professionals, as necessary.
12. Provide evidence-informed assessments, interventions and recommendations.

Dietitians who provide virtual consultation to other Dietitians or other health professionals not considered to establish a direct therapeutic relationship with the client. The client in these situations remains under the care of the Dietitian or health professional requesting the consultation.

References

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