



Registrants will find key public safety items to consider when starting a private practice.

1. Scope of Practice

Dietitians registered with the College of Dietitians of British Columbia (CDBC; the College) have a legal requirement to providing competent, ethical, and safe care to the BC public. In order to uphold this mandate, each dietitian must be aware of the definition of dietetics in the *Health Professions Act's* Dietitians Regulation, which defines scope of practice.

In BC, “dietetics” means: *“the assessment of nutritional needs, design, implementation and evaluation of nutritional care plans and therapeutic diets, the science of food and human nutrition, and dissemination of information about food and human nutrition to attain, maintain and promote the health of individuals, groups and the community.”*

Dietitians are also expected to adhere to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics set by the College. Please refer to the [Standards of Practice, Indicators and Outcomes](#) and the Code of Ethics Principles and Guidelines from the College’s website.

If you are asking yourself whether a particular task or aspect of practice is within your individual competence, you may want to consult the [CDBC Professional Practice Guidelines and the Decision Tool for New Aspects of Dietetic Practice](#). Here are some guiding questions:

1. Is the task within the dietetic scope of practice or reasonably related to it?
2. Are there any legal barriers?
3. Do you have the appropriate skills and competence to perform the task? If not, how can you become competent?
4. Are you the most appropriate person to perform the task? If not, who can you refer to?

You may also want to evaluate and plan to mitigate risks as you plan to start a private practice and refer to the practice advisory questions about [Managing Risk in Practice](#).

2. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a **dietitian’s** personal, business, commercial, political, academic or financial interests, or the interests of the **dietitian’s** family or friends, interfere with the **dietitian’s** professional responsibilities or a client’s best interests. A conflict of interest may exist whether or not a **dietitian** is actually influenced by the competing interest. The conflict of interest may affect **dietitians** in any practice setting.

A conflict of interest can be actual, potential, or perceived and may or may not lead to negative outcomes. An actual conflict of interest is one that has already occurred or currently exists. A potential conflict of interest is one that could possibly develop in the future. A perceived conflict of interest occurs

when others perceive that a conflict of interest may influence a **dietitian's** judgment. **Adapted with thanks from BCCNM's Practice Standard on Conflict of Interest.*

Conflict of interest is reviewed in the following CDBC resources:

- [Standard of Practice #8](#)
- [Jurisprudence Guide, Chapter 4](#), Financial Abuse, and
- [Policy on Conflict of Interest and Sales](#)

3. Professional Boundaries

As stated in Principle 4 of the [Code of Ethics](#) for CDBC registrants, *"a registrant demonstrates inclusion, honesty and integrity at all times when interacting with clients"*. Principle 5 of the Code of Ethics states *"a registrant must demonstrate respect, dignity and privacy at all times when interacting with patients."* Standard of Practice #7 also mandates that: *"a Dietitian maintains professional boundaries at all times."* This is achieved by maintaining professional boundaries with all clients during the provision of services and outside the practice setting and referring a client to another dietitian or qualified health professional when a personal, financial, employment or legal relationship exists or could be perceived to exist that could compromise the objective provision of nutrition care services.

Therapeutic relationships between a dietitian and a client depend on clearly defined professional boundaries to maintain trust, integrity and respect. To ensure you set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with your clients, refer to [Professional Boundaries in a Therapeutic Relationship](#) and Chapter 4 of the CDBC [Jurisprudence Guide](#) for Dietitians in BC.

4. Marketing, Testimonials and Social Media

The [CDBC bylaws'](#) section 77 defines advertising and marketing. Additional interpretation of these bylaws is provided in the [CDBC Marketing Standards](#) and [Social Media Guidelines](#).

[Standard/indicator of Practice](#) #9.7 and standard #17 state that registrants *"must maintain personal and professional integrity when communicating via social media"* and *"A Dietitian who promotes their own or organizational services through media communicates in a professional and accurate manner."*, respectively.

5. Consent

In private practice, dietitians are responsible to obtain and record consent to collect a client's personal information and consent to provide nutritional care. This includes consent for use of a virtual platform in the practice of virtual dietetic practice. As per Standard of Practice #6: *"A Dietitian provides information and obtains informed consent prior to the provision of professional services."*

The College's Quality Assurance policy on [Consent to Nutrition Care](#) and [Consent to Nutrition Care Guidelines](#) provide guidance to how a registrant must obtain consents in order to practice dietetics with a client. Additional CDBC [practice advisory questions](#) on consent, including those on virtual dietetic practice may also be helpful to consult.

6. Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

The CDBC has specific standards for record keeping that can be found on the [Quality Assurance programs page](#). The Standards for Record Keeping are in accordance with the CDBC bylaw 73 that states all records must be kept safe, effective and organized in a systematic approach.

The College defines the following:

- *Clinical Client Record*: Documentation created or gathered that provides information regarding the health care that was provided to an individual by a Registered Dietitian and others, as applicable.
- *Non-clinical Record*: Documentation created or gathered that provides information regarding the services provided to individuals, groups or a facility in a non-clinical work environment, by a Registered Dietitian and others, as applicable.
- *Documentation*: Information in electronic or paper format that provides evidence of the actions, events, facts, thought processes, and/or decisions within dietetic practice.

Section 74 of the CDBC bylaws holds the privacy requirements each registrant must comply with. Registrants may also find more information through the provincial enforcement of BC's access and privacy laws, including the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FIPPA) and the [Personal Information Protection Act](#) (PIPA). More information can be found through the [Provincial government privacy legislation helpline](#) and in the College's [Record Keeping Q&A](#).

Further information, specific to privacy laws that govern private practitioners can also be found in the [Privacy Guide](#).

7. Fees and Taxes

The CDBC does not set fee schedules. However, the fees should be reasonable and fair to cover your time and effort in providing the services and within market fees for similar services.

- Private fees to be charged for dietetic services can be suggested through Dietitians of Canada (email: contactus@dietitians.ca; phone number: +1-416-596-0857).
- Alternatively, other private practice RDs can be contacted in your area to find more information about an appropriate rate.
- To find out about the need to charge Federal and Provincial Tax, please consult the Government of Canada's [Business and Industry website](#), the [BC Income Taxes](#) and consult with a Chartered Professional Accountant for the most current information about taxes.

8. Liability Insurance / Personal Injury and Disability Insurance

As per section 57 of the CDBC bylaws, *"All full, temporary and emergency registrants must obtain and at all times maintain professional liability insurance coverage in an amount of at least two million dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence in a form that is satisfactory to the college"*.

Additionally, through the [Virtual Practice Guidelines](#) (scroll down) the CDBC states that a registrant must:

- Acquire additional liability insurance coverage for virtual dietetic practice outside of BC and Canada, if applicable and,

- Disclose to the insurance provider if virtual practice is a main component of practice

For a registrant who holds their own private business, it is important to consider insurance requirements with an insurance broker. Additionally, it is pertinent to consider additional insurance requirements for registrants who are licensed across jurisdictions for virtual practice. More information about liability insurance required for private practice can be found [here](#).

9. Professional Services

When creating any new business, it is recommended to consult with an accountant and/or a lawyer. Some dietitians may choose to register their business for tax purposes, while others file their taxes as being self-employed. Dietitians in private practice will need to discuss their options with their accountant and/or lawyer. Refer to the [BC Registries and Online Services](#) as well as, [Canada Revenue Agency website](#) for more information about registering businesses.

10. Virtual Practice

Dietitians providing virtual care are expected to provide care that is equivalent to in-person care. It is also important to understand the jurisdiction you plan to practice in (i.e., where your client resides) in order to determine your registration requirements with other jurisdictional regulatory bodies. For more information, look to the [CDBC Virtual Dietetic Practice Policy and its Guidelines](#) and [Virtual Dietetic Practice questions](#).

11. Contingency Planning

Dietitians in private practice should consider their client needs and the medical records by developing a contingency plan in the event that they have to leave their practice, close their practice, or if they are incapacitated long term. For information, refer to [Contingency Planning for Private Practice Q&A](#).

12. Connecting with the College

For any additional information or inquiries please visit the [CDBC website](#). For more specific practice inquiries please contact us at:

info@collegeofdietitiansbc.org

Phone: 604.742.6395

Toll-free: 1.866.742.6395

**This resource was adapted in part thanks to the College of Dietitians of Ontario's "What to Consider When Registered Dietitians Start a Private Practice".*