

Stakeholder Feedback on the Regulation of Dental Assistants under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA)

Responses from Organizations

Note:

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September 5, 2011

Health Professionals Regulatory Advisory Council
55 St Clair Avenue West
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Toronto, ON M4V 2Y7

Dear Council Members of HPRAC;

This letter of support from the Dental Assistant Educators of Canada (DAEC) is being communicated in support of the Ontario Dental Assistants Association proposal for regulation that has been submitted to HPRAC.

The DAEC is a standing committee of the CDAA. Our inclusion with the CDAA represents our shared values and vision. The CDAA is the federation of provincial and military dental assisting organizations and support the provinces in the advancement of the profession of dental assisting. The DAEC is an advocate for dental assisting education at a national level, voice for dental assisting educators in Canada and advocates of the accreditation process for dental assisting education.

The function of the DAEC:

1. to promote communication among dental assistant educators
2. to advance teaching and scholarly activity in dental assisting education
3. to exchange information and views among professionals engaged in health education and scholarly activity
4. to identify trends and requirements in dental assisting education
5. to promote the quality and value of dental assisting education and scholarly activity to other health care providers and educators
6. to promote professional development for dental assisting educators
7. to promote and work towards a common baseline of educational requirements for dental assisting programs in Canada
8. to serve as a liaison for communication with other professional organizations such as the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, the Canadian Dental Assistant Association, the Canadian Dental Association, and provincial Dental Assistant Associations.

Our shared key strategic goal is to have dental assisting recognized as a regulated health profession in all provinces in Canada. Presently, dental assisting is regulated in all provinces with the exception of Ontario and Quebec. Regulation is fundamental in ensuring health care providers maintain a level of professionalism and competence to serve and protect the public. Dental assistants are a valuable and essential part to the dental health team. They have attained increased responsibility with the growth of the profession and are essential health care providers in the areas of infection control as well as a number of intra-oral skills.

The defining of the criteria needed for regulation would provide protection of the public as well as the profession. This could ensure educational programs in Ontario meet the national standards and encourage the adoption of accreditation standards as a requirement.

DAEC stands behind formal education and training as a prerequisite for any person seeking a career as a dental assistant in Canada. In Ontario, dentists can presently hire a person without formal education to do the work of dental assistants. DAEC is astonished that the province of Ontario does not embrace the acceptance of national standards of practice and regulation in the interest of public safety.

Additionally the fact that dental assisting is an unregulated profession in Ontario creates barriers for graduates of Dental Assistant Education Programs in seeking employment outside of Ontario. Canada embraces the potential of labour mobility for its citizens. Regulating dental assisting in Ontario could lift those barriers.

The Ontario Dental Assistants Association (ODAA) is in a poignant and strong position to speak on behalf of Ontario dental assistants. The ODAA is a well-managed organization currently certifying dental assistants and monitoring professional competence through continuing education.

The DAEC supports the ODAA and the dental assistants in Ontario to work collaboratively to ensure dental assisting becomes a regulated health profession in Ontario. The public is entitled to know dental assistants in the employ of Ontario dentists and hygienists are qualified and regulated health care professionals.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dawn Atkin".

Dawn Atkin, RDA
DAEC Chair

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