



**College of Dental Technologists of Ontario**

**Ordre des technologues dentaires de l'Ontario**

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*Sent By E-mail*

John Amodeo, Director  
Health Systems Labour Relations and Regulatory Policy Branch  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
56 Wellsley St. West  
Toronto, ON M5S 2S3

Dear Mr. Amodeo,

**Subject: Current Status of the Patient Relations Program**

The Council of the College of Dental Technologists of Ontario (the “College” or the “CDTO”) is fully committed in its role to provide leadership under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (the “RHPA”) to protect all Ontarians who require the services provided by dental technologists practising in Ontario, and to act in their best interest. We wholeheartedly affirm and reinforce Ontario’s ongoing commitment to a zero tolerance policy approach to sexual abuse of patients by regulated health professionals.

To date the College has participated in two evaluations of the effectiveness of health regulatory college patient relations programs conducted by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC), which resulted in reports to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in May 2001 and May 2008. We look forward to fully participating with the newly appointed Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Patients and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

The Council of the College is pleased to respond to Minister Hoskins’ letter dated December 17, 2014 and provide you with information about the current status and operations of CDTO’s Patient Relations Program.

**Background**

Since 1995, the CDTO Patient Relations Program has included measures to enhance the relationships of dental technologists with patients, clients and co-workers, beyond the mandated sexual abuse prevention requirements of the Regulated Health Professions Act (the “RHPA”).

To date, the College has not received any complaints from patients or non-patients (clients and co-workers) regarding sexual abuse by a member. Most RDT’s practice in dental laboratories and work closely with dentists and other health care practitioners to supply dental appliances. Dental technologists only provide occasional

“shade matching” or visual assessment services to patients referred by dentists and other prescribing health-care professions. They are otherwise not allowed to access patients directly.

The CDTO has always held the view that the creation of a Patient Relations Committee focusing solely on sexual abuse prevention is inefficient, especially since its members have limited direct contact with patients. We also believe that promoting public awareness requires the efforts of more than one committee, college and profession. As a result, from 2001, the CDTO Council has broadened the scope of the program to include “measures that enhance the relation of the profession not only with patients but also clients and co-workers” and mobilizes, in addition to the Patient Relations Committee, other committees, individual Council members and staff to achieve the objectives of its Patient Relations Program.

### **Operations of the College’s Patient Relations Program**

The CDTO’s Patient Relations Committee’s statutory responsibility under the RHPA is to: develop, establish and maintain programs to enhance relations between members of the College and patients, and to assist individual’s to exercise their rights under the RHPA; promote and enhance relations between the College, its members, other health profession colleges, key stakeholder and the public; and, promote inter-professional collaboration with other health professional colleges. To discharge its statutory responsibility, the CDTO’s Patient Relations Committee’s is responsible for developing, implementing and updating:

1. Programs, initiatives or policies regarding matters of promotion and enhancement of relations between the College, its members, other health professional colleges, key stakeholders and the public and with respect to inter-professional collaboration with other health professional colleges;
2. Programs, initiatives or policies regarding matters of professional interaction between members of the College, patients, clients and co-workers and in particular, measures for preventing and/or dealing with “sexual abuse”;
3. The College’s Patient Relations Program, which includes as a minimum: educational requirements for members; guidelines for the conduct of members with their patients; training for staff of the College, and the provision of information to the public.

The Patient Relations Committee is accountable to the College Council to accomplish the activities it sets out to meet its objectives. It is required to update Council on its progress at least once each year.

### **Measures for Preventing and/ or Dealing with Sexual Abuse, Harassment and Violence**

The College’s policy on sexual abuse, harassment and workplace violence was established to:

1. Prevent sexual abuse, harassment and workplace violence by educating, encouraging open dialogue, assessing and investigating potential incidents and informing members of policy development, complaints processes and guidelines for proper professional relationships;
2. Train College staff, Council and Committee members to be proactive, responsive, sensitive and supportive to the needs of complainants and members; and
3. Inform the public and the target groups mentioned above of their rights, the College’s policies and the complaints processes.

Since 2001, the College has developed and disseminated to members the “Principles for Funding Therapy Counselling”, drafted for consultation a regulation on Funding for Therapy and Counselling, and allocated and monitor funding for therapy and counselling on an annual basis. We have increased staff and Council members’

awareness of sexual abuse, harassment and workplace violence issues through sensitization workshops to ensure that complaints of a sexual nature are handled with sensitivity and respect. We have also provided staff with guidelines, standardized checklists and complaint reporting forms to serve complainants effectively. The College has published guidelines for the professional conduct of its members, provided suggested preventive measures when dental technologists see patients, and the steps individuals should take when harassment or abuse occurs.

Information regarding the College's Patient Relations Program is accessible to the public, professional members and clients through a variety of resources including our website. This includes the policies and guidelines for proper professional relationships, as well as the process for making and investigating complaints (including those of a sexual nature). The CDTO provides a PDF/online version and hard-copy of the Complaints brochure which outlines the steps taken when the College receives a complaint.

In addition to the website, the College uses the newsletter 'The Advisor' to inform the public of any new information or changes regarding the Patient Relations Program.

### **Next Steps**

The Council of the College is undertaking a significant program of development in both its governance and operational roles to ensure the College continues to meet its mandate to protect the public interest in a sustainable way. During 2015, the Patient Relations Committee will develop an annual work plan to ensure the College is prepared to handle complaints of a sexual nature and that preventative measures are in place and communicated in a clear and user friendly manner to the public, professional members, clients and staff. An area of focus will be the updating of our practice standards, Jurisprudence & Ethics handbook and quality assurance program to better educate our members to deliver safe, ethical and competent services and specifically address prevention of sexual abuse.

### **Our Commitment**

The College of Dental Technologists of Ontario is committed to its mandate to protect the public and the public's interest. We fully support both the Premier's and the Minister's initiative to raise awareness of sexual discrimination, violence and harassment. Through the various programs of the College, including Patient Relations, Quality Assurance, Training and Communications, we will continue to enhance our prevention initiatives.

Sincerely,



Judith (Judy) Rigby, CPA, CGA  
Registrar and CEO