

Standard for Professional Practice Supervision of Student Learners

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario physiotherapists in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

Introduction

The College recognizes the importance of practical learning for health science students and encourages registrants to contribute to the preparation of students for future health care practice. Students involved in learning may include physiotherapy/physical therapy students from Canada or abroad, internationally educated physiotherapists/physical therapists in a bridging program, support personnel students, or learners from other health professions.

Supervising students is one way in which physiotherapists/physical therapists can promote their ongoing continuing competence, and in fact, can include this in their mandatory professional portfolio.

Standard Statement

In the event of any inconsistency between this standard and any legislation that governs the practice of physiotherapists/physical therapists, the legislation governs.

To ensure public protection, registrants supervising a student will assume professional responsibility and accountability for the care provided by the student. Registrants will balance the need to encourage a student's autonomy and learning with a level of supervision appropriate to the care assigned, and the knowledge, skill and clinical reasoning of the student. A registrant will only supervise a student within the registrant's individual sphere of competence and within the scope of physiotherapy/physical therapy practice.

Common Performance Expectations for the Supervision of Students

A physiotherapist/physical therapist demonstrates the standard by:

1. Evaluating the knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning of the student (s) being supervised prior to assigning patient care.
2. Ensuring that the duties assigned to a student are appropriate for the complexity of the environment/practice setting and the student's
 - level of education;
 - experience; and
 - confidence.
3. Ensuring that he or she supervises students at a level appropriate to the activities that the student will perform, minimizing any potential risk of harm to the patient and providing safe, quality care.
4. Ensuring informed consent from a patient or his/her substitute decision makers is obtained when involving a student in patient care.

5. Ensuring that a physiotherapy/physical therapy student performs a controlled act or authorized activity only when:
 - the activity is within the scope of practice of the profession;
 - the activity is authorized to physiotherapists/physical therapists;
 - the registrant supervising the physiotherapy/physical therapy student in the performance of the activity is competent to perform the controlled act¹ or authorized activity;
 - the physiotherapy/physical therapy student's performance of the controlled act or the authorized activity is under the direct supervision² of a registrant until he/she is able to safely and effectively perform the act with a consistent level of competence; and
 - the supervision of the physiotherapy/physical therapy student's performance of a controlled act or authorized activity continues at a level appropriate to the risk of harm thereafter.
6. Maintaining professional accountability for all aspects of patient care performed by students supervised by a physiotherapist including:
 - interpretation of referrals;
 - initial assessments and evaluations;
 - the development, evaluation and modification of the treatment plan;
 - communication;
 - documentation and billing; and
 - discharge planning
7. Ensuring ongoing evaluation of a student to ensure that the student's performance of assigned clinical interventions, services and activities meets generally accepted professional standards of practice³.
8. Ensuring that patient health records and related documentation written or completed by students include the student's name and status.
9. Ensuring that patient health records and related documentation written or completed by a student include the co-signature of the supervisor.
10. Immediately discontinuing student involvement in patient care in circumstances where the student's actions or deficient knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning places the public at risk, or where the patient withdraws consent for their involvement.

References

Physiotherapy Act, Section 3, 4

Regulated Health Professions Act, Section 27, 29

Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel

Guide to the Standard for Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel

Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada, October 2009

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, Code of Ethics

February 2006, Updated November 2010, March 2011

¹ As per section 28 of the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) learners of controlled acts may only be supervised by individuals of that same profession or by another authorized professional through delegation.

² Direct supervision is defined: where a registrant is physically present to observe and correct, as needed, the performance of the student. The goal of direct supervision is to provide reasonable assurance to the supervisor that the student's level of actual performance meets his/her stated or expected performance of the particular task or activity.

³ When supervising physiotherapy students, the required standard to be met would be the standard of practice of physiotherapy – students of other professions may be held to a different standard of practice. While similar activities in different professions may generally be governed by similar standards, there may be essential differences that, as a supervisor, it will be important to be aware of.