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## College of Dietitians of BC

### Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic Update

This update provides information on College expectations and guidelines for dietitians during a pandemic. As of March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization has declared a pandemic state with the COVID-19.

It is important to recognize that as regulated health professionals, the College and dietitians have a role to play in managing the pandemic health threat. During an infectious disease outbreak, such as the novel coronavirus pandemic, health care services and demands from clients will most likely rapidly evolve. Dietitians may have to weigh the provision of care against competing obligations to maintain their own health and that of their family members. The information below is intended to assist dietitians in exercising their professional judgment through the course of responding to a pandemic.

## COLLEGE' EXPECTATIONS OF DIETITIANS

- Dietitians maintain competent, evidence informed, and ethical practice (CDBC Standards of Practice 1-4 and 13)

During a pandemic outbreak, the [Standards of Practice](#), [Code of Ethics](#) and other legislative requirements relevant to a Dietitian's practice continue to be in place. The [Jurisprudence Guide](#) and [Professional Practice Guidelines](#) outline College resources available to support Dietitians in meeting their legal practice requirements.

Dietitians are also reminded to follow workplace policies and protocols and to keep informed of changes needed to adjust to the pandemic response.

In situations where your work becomes virtual, please refer to the CDBC [Virtual Dietetic Practice policy](#) and [guidelines](#).

- Dietitians determine practice situations beyond personal level of competence and consult, refer or obtain further knowledge and skills.

During a pandemic, dietitians may be asked to perform tasks outside of their usual dietetic scope of practice (e.g., measure body temperature, take medical history, helping with food distribution). In accepting these tasks, dietitians need to assess their competence and safety and take appropriate steps to acquire competence in a particular area. This may include asking the employer to provide training or listen to a webinar.

In an emergency, there may be a need for health care professionals to be reallocated from their usual roles and settings. Again, while personal competence may restrict certain practices, dietitians need to

consider how they can gain competence to support their workplace, their clients and other partners in a time of need.

Dietitians available to support the pandemic because of temporarily program closure or staff shortages, may connect with their immediate supervisors to find out how they can best support their workplace and colleagues.

Dietitians in private practice who become available for pandemic support work are encouraged to stay informed as BC Government announcements are made. As social distancing is strongly recommended by the province, Dietitians operating a private practice or other non-essential business might want to consider suspending temporarily their services in order to protect themselves and their clients.

Dietitians can consult the [decision tool on new aspects of practice](#) to assist them to consider requests and opportunities for assuming new tasks, roles and responsibilities, if needed during the pandemic.

➤ **Dietitians seek information and incorporate an evidence-informed approach practice.**

The CDBC defines evidence-based or evidence-informed dietetic practice as the integration of best available research evidence with dietetic expertise and client values. Evidence-informed dietetic practice involves balancing best evidence and professional judgement with client interests and needs for optimal care outcomes.

Dietitians should take the time to educate themselves about pandemics by knowing the facts to prepare professionally and personally for responding when there is a pandemic.

\*This document was adapted in Collaboration with the College of Dietitians of Ontario.