



College of  
**Dental Hygienists**  
of Ontario

*Protecting your health and your smile*

## **Quality Assurance Program**

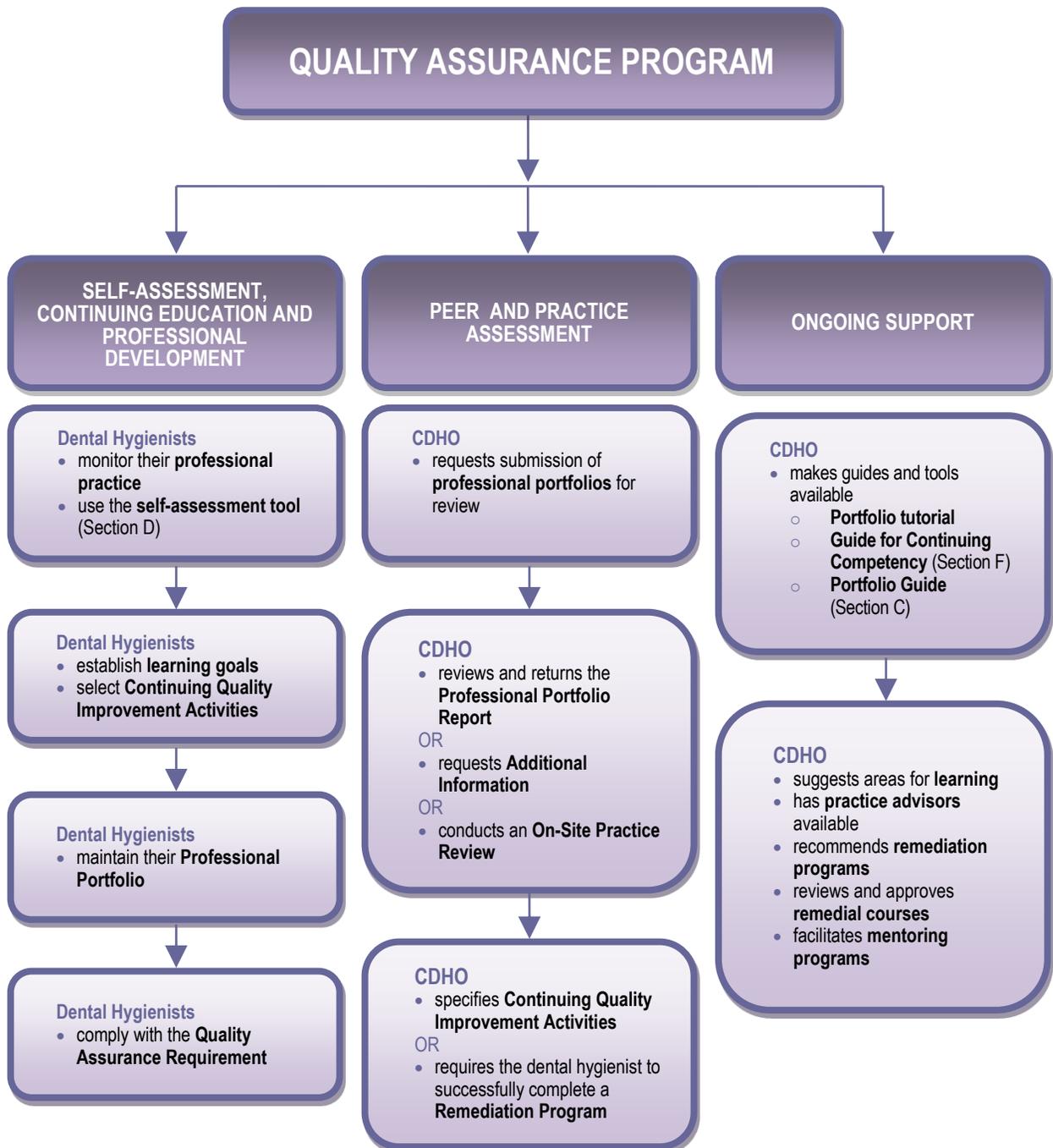
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Section B

## Section B – Quality Assurance Program

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Outline of Quality Assurance Program



# College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario

## Quality Assurance Program

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### *Introduction*

In Ontario, the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA) requires all health regulatory colleges under the Act to develop and to maintain a Quality Assurance Program to ensure the provision of optimal quality care to the public and to promote continuing quality improvement among its members. The role of the Regulatory College is to assure the public that dental hygiene care is safe, ethical, effective and of high quality.

The mission of the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO) is to regulate the practice of dental hygiene in the interest of the overall health and safety of the public of Ontario.

In the development of the Quality Assurance Program, CDHO acknowledges that dental hygienists are competent professionals whose goals include maintaining and improving their level of competence based on accepted standards of practice.

As self-regulating professionals, dental hygienists are expected to:

- assure that their professional responsibility to the client prevails;
- apply the *CDHO Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice*, CDHO Code of Ethics, and CDHO regulations and bylaws to their dental hygiene practice;
- maintain and improve their level of competence through the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills and judgment; and
- be accountable for their actions.

The Quality Assurance Committee is a statutory committee of the CDHO and, as such, it is responsible for the implementation, the ongoing maintenance and evaluation of the Quality Assurance Program. The CDHO Quality Assurance Program is designed to foster openness and candidness between dental hygienists and the Quality Assurance Committee.

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## **Quality Assurance Program**

Under the RHPA, the mandate of the CDHO is to govern in the public interest. Within this mandate, there has been a shift of focus from enforcement or quality control to that of quality improvement. This shift requires CDHO to contribute directly to the improvement of the quality of health services, a responsibility that reinforces individual accountability for ensuring continuing quality improvement. To this end, the Quality Assurance Program encompasses three main components.

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## **CDHO Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice**

The *CDHO Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice* are expressed as criteria. Criteria are variables believed or known to be relevant indicators of the quality of dental hygiene care. The associated standards refer to the desired and achievable level or range of performance with which actual performance is compared. In the *CDHO Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice*, the criteria are grouped into those related to professionalism and those related to professional practice. Each criterion has standards relating to one of the following eight domains: responsibility, accountability, knowledge application, continuing competency, professional relationships, practice environments, practice management, and dental hygiene services and programs. The *CDHO Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice* are to be used by dental hygienists to assess their dental hygiene practices and to identify learning goals that will direct continuing quality improvement activities.

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## **Entry to Practice**

CDHO requires that an individual wishing to become registered as a dental hygienist must be (1) a graduate of an accredited/assessed equivalent dental hygiene education program and (2) hold a certificate from the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board.

## **Components of the Quality Assurance Program**

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### **1. Self-Assessment, Continuing Education and Professional Development**

#### **Maintenance of a Professional Portfolio**

The *Professional Portfolio* is the major component of the Quality Assurance Program. It serves as a positive focus for continuous quality improvement and will permit the dental hygienist to review their practice through self and peer assessment.

The *Professional Portfolio* will permit you to reflect on your dental hygiene practice, to identify areas of your practice that require enhancement/improvement and to customize your continuing quality improvement activities in a manner that suits your personal situation and resources. Continuing quality improvement activities may include but are not limited to self-study, study groups, distance education, journal reading, continuing education courses and professional activities.

The primary focus of the Quality Assurance Program will be to ensure that clients receive quality care from all practitioners. Mechanisms will be developed and refined over time to assist dental hygienists to meet this standard and to ensure that it is being met. All registered dental hygienists will be responsible for

establishing and maintaining a *Professional Portfolio* throughout their dental hygiene careers as a requirement for the annual renewal of their certificate of registration. Dental hygienists will document continuing quality improvement activities sufficient, in accordance with the policies and guidelines published by the College, to demonstrate that they continue to have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment required to practise dental hygiene in a safe and competent manner. The contents of the *Professional Portfolio* are confidential. **When the CDHO requests a Professional Portfolio/Practice Review, only authorized personnel will have access to the Professional Portfolio.**

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## ***2. Peer and Practice Assessment (A Quality Assurance Component)***

### Professional Portfolio/Practice Review

The Quality Assurance Committee/Panel will review dental hygienists' Professional Portfolios on an annual basis. Registrants may be selected for review in a number of ways, including:

- stratified random sampling using pre-determined demographic criteria to ensure sufficient numbers of dental hygienists from different groups of interest
- if a request is made of the registrant about their level of participation in continuing quality improvement and the registrant does not provide accurate information or their records do not demonstrate that they have engaged in any continuing quality improvement activities
- on the basis of criteria specified by the Committee and published on the College's website at least three months before the member is selected.

A written report of the assessment will be forwarded to the dental hygienist with notice that the dental hygienist has the right to make written submissions to the Committee. If a review of a dental hygienist's Professional Portfolio by the Quality Assurance Committee determines that the assessment criteria/guidelines for a satisfactory portfolio have not been met, or if concerns are identified from other information before it, the panel may direct a review of the dental hygienist's practice at her/his practice location.

After considering the report and the dental hygienist's written submission and any other available information, the Panel may require the dental hygienist to correct any deficiency within a specified period of time, may grant an exemption, or may direct the dental hygienist to complete specified continuing education programs within a specified period of time and/or direct a review of the dental hygienist's practice at her/his practice location.

In circumstances where the Committee determines that the dental hygienist's knowledge, skills, judgment or attitudes are unsatisfactory or if her/his continuing education program specified by the Committee has not been completed successfully, and believes that any other order available to it is inadequate alone to address the concerns, the Committee may direct the Registrar to impose terms, conditions or limitations on the dental hygienist's certificate of registration.

**Changes to the Professional Portfolio/Practice Review policies, forms and assessment guidelines will be published annually by the Quality Assurance Committee.**

### Practice Enhancement/Remediation

Practice enhancement/remediation activities are required for dental hygienists found deficient in their knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment as identified through the portfolio/practice audit. Required

courses will be identified by the Quality Assurance Committee to remediate the identified deficiencies. Successful completion of these activities is required as specified in the Quality Assurance Regulations. The dental hygienist is responsible for the costs associated with practice enhancement/remediation activities.

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### **3. Ongoing Support**

The CDHO has the following tools and guides available to assist dental hygienists in fulfilling their QA requirements:

- Portfolio Guide
- Professional Portfolio Forms Tutorial
- Guidelines for Continuing Competency
- Self-Assessment Package
- Regular *Milestones* articles related to quality assurance matters
- Practice advisors available by phone or email to assist registrants
- Individualized remediation programs
- Reviewed and approved remedial courses
- Mentoring programs.

Please review all the materials in your package carefully. If you have any questions regarding the Quality Assurance Program, contact the Quality Assurance Administrator at 416-961-6234, ext. 235 or 1-800-268-2346.