

Psychosocial Interventions: An Interpretive Guide to the Restricted Activity

What is the purpose and status of this guideline?

- This document was developed in collaboration with employers and regulated health professionals.
- It is intended to assist employers, practitioners and others in understanding this particular restricted activity.
- This document is to be considered as a guideline only and should not be considered as representing a legal opinion.

What are restricted activities?

Restricted activities are health services set out in Schedule 7.1 to the *Government Organization Act* (GOA). Because of the risks associated with the performance of these activities and the need to ensure that practitioners possess the necessary competencies, these activities can only be performed by authorized persons. Examples of restricted activities include performing invasive procedures below the dermis, prescribing schedule 1 drugs, ordering X-rays, administering anaesthesia.

A restricted activity may be performed by:

- a regulated health professional governed under the (HPA) or the *Health Disciplines Act*, if the regulation governing that health professional authorizes the performance of the restricted activity,
- a person who is supervised by a regulated health professional
 - who is authorized to perform the restricted activity by a regulation under the HPA
 - that regulation allows the regulated practitioner to supervise others in the performance of the restricted activity
 - and the regulated practitioner consents to the person performing the restricted activity under their supervision, or
- a person who is authorized by a Ministerial Regulation made in accordance with section 3 of Schedule 7.1 to the GOA.

What are psychosocial interventions and how are they restricted?

- Psychosocial interventions are treatments such as cognitive – behavioural therapies (CBT), behaviour modification, counselling and supportive psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis. They do not include pharmacological or surgical interventions.
- A psychosocial intervention is a restricted activity only when it is “[performed] ... *with an expectation of treating a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs (i) judgment, (ii) behaviour, (iii) capacity to recognize reality, or (iv) ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.*” For ease of reference, we refer to a psychosocial intervention that is performed under these conditions as a “restricted psychosocial intervention”.
- *Section 2(2) of Schedule 7.1 to the GOA indicates that the following, in particular, are not restricted activities: (a) activities of daily living, whether performed by the individual or by a surrogate on the individual’s behalf, (b) giving information or providing advice with the intent of enhancing personal development, providing emotional support or promoting spiritual growth of individuals, couples, families and groups.*

How do we know when a psychosocial intervention is a restricted activity?

- Unlike other restricted activities such as “prescribing a schedule-1 drug” or “ordering an x-ray”, psychosocial interventions are restricted only under certain circumstances.
- To determine if a particular psychosocial intervention is a restricted activity, two criteria must be met:
 - **Practitioner Intent:** In a restricted psychosocial intervention the practitioner expects or intends to treat the patient with interventions designed to treat the underlying disorder rather than focussing on assisting the patient to function more resourcefully with the condition.
 - **Patient Condition:** For a psychosocial intervention to be restricted, treatment must be related to a substantial disorder that grossly impairs (i) judgment, (ii) behaviour, (iii) capacity to recognize reality, or (iv) ability to meet the ordinary demands of life. The patient’s condition puts the patient at risk due to their inability to judge the appropriateness of the intervention and the risks of not adhering to it. The patient may also be, as a result of their condition, unable to address their basic life sustaining needs such as food, clothing and shelter etc. or otherwise function in society, causing a risk to their health and safety. Examples of such conditions include but are not limited to severe depression, disabling anxiety, schizophrenia, drug or alcohol induced psychosis and acute withdrawal from drugs or alcohol.
- The Table at the end of this document illustrates these distinctions.

Which practitioners can perform restricted psychosocial interventions?

- The following practitioners are currently authorized or permitted to provide restricted psychosocial interventions:
 - **Regulated health professionals:** Physicians, psychologists, registered dietitians, occupational therapists, psychiatric nurses, registered nurses and specifically authorized social workers are authorized in their regulations under the HPA to perform restricted psychosocial interventions within the practice of their respective professions. Licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are also authorized to perform restricted psychosocial interventions as members of multi-disciplinary teams while under the direction of a professional who is competent and authorized to provide restricted psychosocial interventions and who is not an LPN.
 - **Practitioners Employed, Contracted or Funded by Alberta Health Services:** The current *Restricted Activity Authorization Regulation* provides broad authorization for individuals, who are not one of the above regulated health professions, to perform restricted psychosocial interventions for the purpose of providing addiction counselling. The regulation also requires Alberta Health Services to maintain a list of these individuals.
 - **Practitioners supervised by regulated health professionals:** The regulations for physicians, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers also allow practitioners who are authorized to perform this restricted activity to permit other unregulated practitioners to perform restricted psychosocial interventions under their supervision. Under their current regulations, registered nurses cannot permit unregulated practitioners to perform this restricted activity under their supervision;

however, the College and Association of Registered Nurses (CARNA) is considering a regulatory amendment to enable this practice.

If a psychosocial intervention is not a restricted activity, does this mean that we need not be *concerned about practitioner competencies and standards of practice*?

- To competently assess a patient, determine a course of treatment and to perform a psychosocial intervention requires significant competencies, irrespective of whether or not the treatment involves a restricted psychosocial intervention.
- Consumers, employers and providers need to be cognizant of the competency of providers in all circumstances. Certainly treating or planning the treatment of a patient with disorder such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety or alcoholism requires a significant level of competence irrespective of that patient's ability to exercise appropriate judgment and meet the ordinary demands of life.
- When a college develops a standard of practice for its members, those standards apply to all services provided by the member within the practice of the profession.

When is a Psychosocial Intervention a Restricted Activity?

		Does the practitioner expect or Intend to treat the underlying condition?	
		No	Yes
Patient has substantial disorder that grossly impairs	Yes	<p>The practitioner intends to counsel, provide advice, guidance direction, support and assistance about lifestyle choices, assisting with problem solving, promoting access to resources and providing ongoing support to a patient with a substantial disorder where the patient's judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality or meet the ordinary demands of life is grossly impaired.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not a Restricted Activity.</p>	<p>The practitioner intends to treat a patient with a substantial disorder where the patient's judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality or meet the ordinary demands of life is grossly impaired. The practitioner uses interventions to treat underlying condition such as psychotherapy, CBT, and other specialized interventions that are designed to alter thoughts, perceptions or moods.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Restricted Activity.</p>
	No	<p>The practitioner intends to counsel, provide advice, guidance direction, support and assistance about lifestyle choices, assisting with problem solving, promoting access to resources and providing ongoing support to a patient without a substantial disorder where their judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality or meet the ordinary demands of life is not grossly impaired.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not a Restricted Activity.</p>	<p>The practitioner intends to treat a patient without a substantial disorder where the patient's judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality or meet the ordinary demands of life is not grossly impaired. The practitioner uses interventions to treat underlying condition such as psychotherapy, CBT, and other specialized interventions that are designed to alter thoughts, perceptions or moods.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not a Restricted Activity.</p>