



COMPETENCY BASED
PROFESSIONAL
PRACTICE STANDARDS

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Introduction to Professional Practice Standards

Physiotherapists¹ are required to perform within their scope of practice² and to meet the practice standards of the profession in Nova Scotia as established by the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists (hereafter referred to as “the College”). The expectation for the College to develop standards is derived from Section 4(3) Of the Physiotherapy Act, which lays out the Objects of the College. Standards are intended to help members understand their professional obligation when practicing as physiotherapists. It is recognized that individual physiotherapists will strive to exceed these standards; however all physiotherapists are required to meet the expected competencies defined in these practice standards as appropriate for their practice. These standards include performance criteria that will form the basis for guiding a reasonable competent practice. Professional practice standards are used to educate and guide physiotherapists in their practice. In the regulatory process we also use these standards, and the suggested performance criteria, to refine the measurement tools for peer assessment and for Complaint investigation. The expectation is that all members would **meet at least 80% of these criteria** as they apply to their own practice.

¹ Physiotherapy, physiotherapist, physical therapy, physical therapist, physiothérapeute, physiothérapie, PT, and pht are legally protected terms. The terms physiotherapy and physiotherapist are considered synonyms for physical therapy and physical therapist respectively.

² Physiotherapy is the application of professional physiotherapy knowledge, skills and judgment by a physiotherapist to obtain, regain or maintain optimal health and functional performance. [Section 29 (r) of the Physiotherapy Act]

As set out in the *Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada (2009)* the physiotherapist profile integrates seven roles with key competencies related to each role. The seven roles are listed below, with the associated key competencies of each.

I **Expert**

1. Consults with the client to obtain information on health, past medical history, medications, and previous interventions.
2. Collects assessment data relevant to the client's needs and the physiotherapist's practice.
3. Analyze and record assessment findings to establish a physiotherapy diagnosis and prognosis
4. Develops and recommends, and explains an intervention strategy /treatment plan and the expected outcome.
5. Implements the intervention /treatment.
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of intervention / treatment and the outcomes.
7. Completes physiotherapy services when appropriate with discharge planning, reporting, and recording of outcomes.

II **Communicator**

8. Respects the confidentiality of personal health information and develops and builds ethical professional relationships.
9. Employs effective and appropriate verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic communications.
10. Elicits, analyzes, records, applies conveys and shares information.

III **Collaborator**

11. Delivers client centered care and collaborates to establish and maintain interprofessional relationships.
12. Collaborates with others to prevent, manage and resolve conflict.

IV **Manager**

13. Manages individual practice effectively and with professional integrity and fiduciary responsibility.
14. Manages and supervises personnel involved in the delivery of physiotherapy services.
15. Participates in activities that contribute to safe and effective physiotherapy practice.

V **Advocate**

16. Works collaboratively to promote the health needs and concerns of individual clients, populations and communities.

VI **Scholarly Practitioner**

- 17. Uses a reflective approach to practice.
- 18. Incorporates lifelong learning, and experience into best practice.
- 19. Engages in scholarly enquiry and student mentoring.

VII **Professional**

- 20. Conducts self within legal and ethical requirements.
- 21. Respects the individuality and autonomy of the client.
- 22. Contributes to the development of the physiotherapy profession.
- 23. Works in safe environment to maintain the best interests of the client.

Below are the NS College of Physiotherapists practice standards based on the key competencies related to each role.

I EXPERT

As experts in function and mobility, physiotherapists integrate all of their roles to lead in promotion, improvement, and maintenance of the mobility, health and well-being of their clients.

There are 7 standards related to the role of Expert...

- 1. **Consults with the client to obtain information on health, past medical history, medications, and previous interventions.**

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Explains the process and procedures, and obtains consent prior to examination.
Interviews client to obtain detailed relevant information and health history (past and present).
Identifies the associated health factors affecting physical and occupational performance, and assesses the client's perception of their functional status and quality of life.
Determines client's expectations related to physiotherapy services.
Collects and reviews information related to prior functional ability, physical performance and participation.
Collects and reviews health information from chart or other health records or sources. (Professional colleagues, family etc. if available).

- 2. **Collects assessment data relevant to the client's needs and the physiotherapist's practice.**

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Performs a thorough clinical evaluation using appropriate standardized assessment tools /techniques available including screening /safety tests. Documents findings.
Explains precautions and potential risks of any examination or treatment technique to the client.
Safely performs a full physiotherapy assessment of the client, and minimizes risk by following Universal (routine practice) Precautions at all times.
Monitors the client for changes during the course of the assessment and takes appropriate actions as required.

3. Analyze and record assessment findings to establish a physiotherapy diagnosis and prognosis.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Documents key observations, test results, analysis, and needs. Explains the nature of the problem and the rationale for physiotherapy treatment, or further consultation, to the client.
Client centered care considers the needs and resources of the client, ensuring that the type and duration of service reflect best practice.
Formulates and documents the physiotherapy diagnosis based on assessment findings.
Communicates the diagnosis to the client or other health care professional as appropriate.
Recognizes when findings indicate a need for referral to another discipline, or are not within their scope of practice, and makes the appropriate referral.

4. Develops, recommends, and explains an intervention strategy /treatment plan and the expected outcome.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Uses best available evidence to develop a treatment plan considering client preference, resources and abilities.
Discusses concurrent treatments and possible effects.
Promotes informed decision-making by helping client understand the evaluation and treatment plan
Outlines the client's responsibilities relative to the treatment plan as well as outlining the potential risks and alternate treatment options.
Establishes and documents client-centered goals that are specific, measurable, attainable and realistic and time based
Identifies resources needed to carryout home programs i.e. time, assistance, equipment and/or supplies
Informs client of the expected outcomes and obtain consent to initiate and follow the treatment plan.
Recognizes when a client's problem or issue is beyond their scope of practice and refers the individual to the appropriate health professional.

5. Implements the intervention /treatment.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Documents modalities used, dosages, placement of any electrodes, pads, etc.
Determines duration and frequency of treatment in collaboration with client.
Ensures all equipment is in proper working order and uses it safely and effectively.
Appropriately delegates tasks to support personnel; Monitors the delegated task and documents appropriately.
Orient clients to practice setting and ensure that they know when and how to contact staff when left unsupervised.
Obtain and document informed consent/refusal prior to any treatment procedure
Demonstrates positive and motivating interaction with clients

6. Evaluate the effectiveness of intervention / treatment and the outcomes.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Recognize and report any error or adverse situation.
Reviews, updates and maintains notes legibly keeping the physiotherapy entries identifiable and understandable, in the healthcare team record.
Document information about delegation of tasks, interventions used, and the client's response, including errors or adverse reactions.
Reviews the treatment plan regularly with client and modify /update on an ongoing basis to maximize progress.
Uses standardized measures to compare initial status with current status.
Recognizes when findings indicate a need for referral to another discipline, or need for more advanced scope of practice, and makes the appropriate referral.

Indicators are:

7. Completes physiotherapy services when appropriate with discharge planning, reporting, and recording of outcomes.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Maintain a complete and legible client record, including copies of referrals and correspondence with other parties; ensure that the client's name is on each page.
Uses standardized measures to compare initial status with discharge status.
Discusses discharge with client when service is no longer indicated; prepare discharge report.
Discontinues treatment at client's request or if it is no longer effective.
Recommends options for ongoing care as appropriate.
Receives written consent from the client to share information with third party payers, and documents when client consent is given to share information with health team members.

II COMMUNICATOR

Physiotherapists use effective communication to develop professional relationships with clients, families care providers and other stakeholders. They understand the importance of confidentiality, timely reporting, and maintaining a complete, legible and accurate clinical record which includes a record of examination and evaluation results, treatment plan, goals set, interventions used, outcomes achieved and any errors made, along with dates of all visits or communications as appropriate for the practice setting. Entries are chronological, signed and completed in a timely fashion.

There are three standards related to communication.

8. Respects the confidentiality of personal health information and develops and builds ethical professional relationships.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Complies with legislation for collection, use, storage, and disclosure of personal and health information.
All communication must respect an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality
Document all consents and any verbal information received
Ensures that charting is done in a non-public area so as to maintain confidentiality, and that charts are securely stored
Demonstrates effective listening and cultural sensitivity

9. Employs effective and appropriate verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic communications.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Documents on each page of notes the modalities used, dosages applied, placement of equipment, measurements and ongoing analysis of data.
Ensures that the physiotherapy entries are legible and identifiable in team notes.
Signs all entries and maintain them in chronological order. Reviews cosigned notes
Corrections or changes are to be struck through with a single line and initialed.
Client records maintained for a minimum of 12 years after the date of the last entry, and in the case of minors, Twelve years past the 18 th birthday

10. Elicits, analyzes, records, applies, conveys and shares information.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Reviews the treatment plan regularly with client and modifies /updates on an ongoing basis to maximize progress.
Appropriately addresses concerns about any aspect of the client's physiotherapy care from the client or other team members involved in care
Ensure that the physiotherapy entries are legible and identifiable in team notes.
Ensures continuity in service by communicating effectively to the substitute service provider, and by charting clearly, the current treatment plan and progression.
Responds to requests for reports about the physiotherapy care in a timely and comprehensive manner where client has given consent
Refers to another physiotherapist any treatment that is beyond their own level of competency.

III COLLABORATOR

Physiotherapists work collaboratively and effectively to promote inter-professional practice and achieve optimal client care.

There are 2 standards related to collaboration

11. Delivers client centered care and collaborates to establish and maintain inter-professional relationships.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Integrates understanding and respect for the role of other team members in providing client centered care.
Recognizes when findings indicate a need for referral to another discipline, or are not within their scope of practice, and makes the appropriate referral
Responds to requests for reports about the physiotherapy care in a timely and comprehensive manner where client has given consent
Educates the client with information on self-management, prevention and health promotion with links to community based programs where available.

12. Collaborates with others to prevent, manage and resolve conflict.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Full disclosure of any potential conflict of interest.
Obtain and document informed consent/refusal prior to any treatment procedure.
Discontinues treatment at client's request or if it is no longer effective.
Performs only the treatments for which there is informed consent.
Ensures that any delegation of service is appropriate and supervised in accordance with the College Regulations.
Refers to another physiotherapist any treatment that is beyond their own level of competency.
Accepts responsibility for actions and decisions.
Knows when and how to apologize.

IV MANAGER

Physiotherapists manage time, resources, and priorities at all levels for individual practice and to ensure sustainable physiotherapy practice overall.

There are 3 standards related to Management

13. Manages individual practice effectively and with professional integrity and fiduciary responsibility.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Charges justifiable fees and explains fees/ billing prior to provision of service.
Manages caseload appropriately with time for provision of client services.
Apply an ethical framework to all decision making.
Autonomy in practice and accepts responsibility for actions and decisions.
Client records maintained for a minimum of 12 years after the date of the last entry, and in the case of minors, twelve years past the 18 th birthday.

14. Manages and supervises personnel involved in the delivery of physiotherapy services.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Demonstrates an understanding of the organizational structure and the scope and limitations of the service. There should be a Policy and Procedure Manual available onsite and an orientation program for new staff.
Has a staff development plan with consideration for continuing education
Has sufficient numbers of professional staff to safely meet the scope and volume of the services offered,
Appropriately delegates tasks to support personnel; Monitors the delegated task and documents appropriately.

15. Participates in activities that contribute to safe and effective physiotherapy practice.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Ensures only physiotherapists, or their appropriate delegates, are doing the physiotherapy treatment.
Awareness and understanding of the fire and emergency response plan for their work area. Ensures fire extinguishers are present and functioning.
Follows appropriate infection control , disposal techniques and WHMIS and OHS procedures,
Orients clients to practice setting and ensures that they know when and how to contact staff when left unsupervised.
Participates in quality improvement and client safety initiatives.

V ADVOCATE

Physiotherapists responsibly use their knowledge and expertise to promote the health and well-being of individual clients, communities, populations and the profession.

There is 1 standard related to advocacy.

16. Works collaboratively to promote the health needs and concerns of individual clients, populations and communities.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Apply an ethical framework to all decision making.
Educates the client with information on self-management, prevention and health promotion with links to community based programs where available.
Educates peers and/or public on health issues and disease prevention
Assists client to navigate the Health System
Integrates understanding and respect for the role of other team members in providing client centered care.
Takes opportunities to communicate the role and benefits of physiotherapy

VI SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER

Physiotherapists are committed to ongoing learning for the purpose of improving client outcomes through seeking, creating, disseminating, and translating knowledge to practice.

There are 3 standards related to scholarly activity.

17. Uses a reflective approach to practice.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Apply an ethical framework to all decision making.
Self-assessment of practice to identify learning needs and maintain competency
Considers how one's own beliefs and values and experiences can impact decision making.

18. Incorporates lifelong learning, and experience into best practice.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Engages in professional development
Incorporates best evidence into planning and delivery of services

19. Engages in scholarly enquiry and student mentoring.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Engages in data collection that would support self-reflection and clinical research i.e. standardized measures,
Mentors and assists student learning
Engages in continuing education activities to maintain competency

VII PROFESSIONAL

Physiotherapists are committed to the best interests of their client and of society through ethical practice, support of profession-led regulation, and high personal standards of behavior.

There are 3 standards related to professionalism

20. Conducts self within legal and ethical requirements.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Knowledge of, and access to, the Physiotherapy Act, Regulations and Code of Ethics
Self-assessment of practice to identify learning needs and maintain competency
Practices within own level of competency and within professional scope.
Obtain and document informed consent/refusal prior to any treatment procedure
Accepts responsibility for actions and decisions.
Maintains a professional-therapeutic relationship with client.

21. Respects the individuality and autonomy of the client.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Share decision making with the client.
Actively involves the client in establishing treatment goals.
Respects the client's right to and desire for privacy and maintain confidentiality.

:

22. Contributes to the development of the physiotherapy profession.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Engages in student mentoring
Participates in in services, public education, professional conferences etc.
Respects the client's right to and desire for privacy and maintain confidentiality.

23. Works in safe environment to maintain the best interests of the client.

Indicators are:

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
There is adequate space to meet the workload and allow for safe movement about the area, with exits clearly marked.
The space is clean and tidy and wheelchair accessible.
The electrical equipment is functioning properly, with documented calibration and proof of service as per the manufacturer's recommendations.
All outlets are properly installed and meet the current electrical code requirements.* There should be written documentation of same.

**At present (2007) the (new building) code requires orange grade plugs with ground fault circuit interrupters in all patient treatment areas. Sites constructed/renovated prior to then would have green grade plugs and GFIs in water treatment areas.*

In addition to these Standards for Professional Practice, there are three other sets of standards for physiotherapy practice in Nova Scotia:

- Standards for Professional Qualification** (Ref. Registration Requirements)
- Standards for Professional Ethics** (Ref. Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct)
- Standards for Continuing Competency** (Ref. Quality Practice Program)