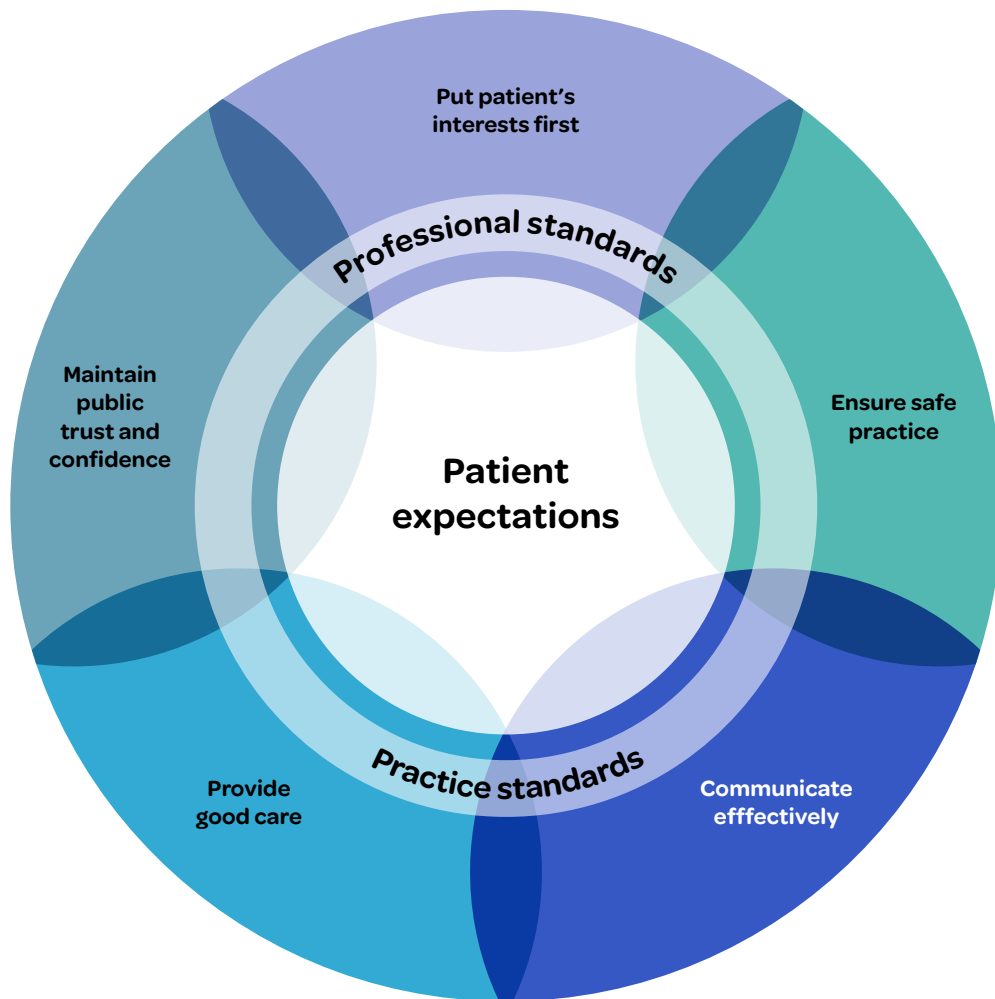




FRAMEWORK

STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

For oral health practitioners



The standards framework describes standards of professional behaviour, and clinical and cultural competence that must be met by all oral health practitioners.

CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS

See page 02

PURPOSE

See page 03

COMPLIANCE

See page 03

STANDARDS THAT PRACTITIONERS MUST MEET

See page 04

STANDARDS FRAMEWORK WITH GUIDANCE AND PATIENT EXPECTATIONS

See page 07

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Put patients' interests first

See page 08

Ensure safe practice

See page 10

Communicate effectively

See page 12

Provide good care

See page 14

Maintain public trust and confidence

See page 16

DEFINITIONS

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

There are five ethical principles. These are not listed in any order of priority; they all have equal importance. The ethical principles are the foundation for the professional standards.



Put patients' interest first



Ensure safe practice



Communicate effectively



Provide good care



Maintain public trust and confidence

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Professional standards describe the actions and behaviours expected from oral health practitioners to ensure competent and safe practice.

PRACTICE STANDARDS

Practice standards are developed for specific practice areas where additional detail is needed to ensure practitioners meet the professional standards.

PURPOSE

The Dental Council sets standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct for oral health practitioners under section 118(1)(i) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

The standards framework describes minimum standards of professional behaviour, and clinical and cultural competence that patients and the public can expect from oral health practitioners. These standards apply to dentists, dental specialists, oral health therapists, dental therapists, dental hygienists, orthodontic auxiliaries, dental technicians and clinical dental technicians.

The standards framework may be used by the courts, Health and Disability Commissioner, Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal and the Dental Council when a practitioner's conduct, competence or fitness to practise is brought into question.

COMPLIANCE

All oral health practitioners are required to meet the standards set by the Council.

Failure to meet the standards may result in investigation or action by the Dental Council and may impact a practitioner's practice.

There may be circumstances where factors outside a practitioner's control affect their ability to fully meet the standards. In such situations,

practitioners must be guided by the ethical principles, demonstrate insight, and exercise sound professional judgement to minimise risk and act in the best interests of patients and the public. Practitioners must be able to justify and document any departure from Council standards.

See page 04 and 05 for the standards that practitioners must meet.

STANDARDS THAT PRACTITIONERS MUST MEET

All oral health practitioners are required to meet professional standards 1–26 and comply with the practice standards. These are listed below.

Professional standards



Put patients' interest first

- 1 You must ensure the health needs and safe care of your patients are your primary concerns
- 2 You must put the interests of your patients ahead of personal, financial or other gain
- 3 You must treat patients with dignity and respect at all times
- 4 You must treat patients fairly and without discrimination, respecting cultural values, personal disabilities and individual differences
- 5 You must respect patients' autonomy and freedom of choice
- 6 You must respect patients' right to complain and facilitate resolution
- 7 You must protect the confidentiality of patient information
- 8 You must practise within your professional knowledge and skills, and offer referral to another health professional where appropriate



Ensure safe practice

- 9 You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up-to-date through ongoing learning and professional interaction
- 10 You must maintain appropriate skills and equipment to manage medical emergencies
- 11 You must maintain accurate, time-bound and up-to-date patient records
- 12 You must identify and manage health and safety risks within your practice environment

**Communicate effectively**

- 13 You must communicate honestly and provide accurate, factual information without exaggeration
- 14 You must listen to your patients and consider their preferences and concerns
- 15 You must give patients the information they need or request, in a way they can understand, so they can make informed decisions
- 16 You must ensure informed consent remains valid at all times
- 17 You must communicate effectively with others to coordinate and support patient care
- 18 You must behave respectfully in communication to and about your colleagues, other health professionals, and health related organisations

**Provide good care**

- 19 You must provide clinically justified care that considers a person's overall health and wellbeing, and is based on the best available evidence
- 20 You must take responsibility for the assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and care you provide including when you rely on external advice, technologies, and services directly related to the care
- 21 You must collaborate with others to facilitate appropriate care
- 22 You must promote the oral health needs of the community

**Maintain public trust and confidence**

- 23 You must act with honesty and integrity to ensure your professional and personal conduct enables trust in you and your profession
- 24 You must be familiar and comply with your legal and professional obligations
- 25 You must maintain appropriate boundaries in your interactions with patients, colleagues, and the public
- 26 You must protect the interests of patients and colleagues from any risk of harm posed by your health, competence, or conduct, or that of a colleague or an employee

Practice standards

Oral health practitioners **must** comply with the practice standards.



Advertising



Blood borne viruses



Best practice when providing care to Māori patients and their whānau



Cultural competence



Infection prevention and control



Informed consent



Medical emergencies



Patient records and privacy of health information



Professional boundaries



Sedation

DRAFT

STANDARDS FRAMEWORK WITH GUIDANCE AND PATIENT EXPECTATIONS

The Code of Health and Disability Service Consumers' Rights establishes the rights of patients and the duties of healthcare providers.

Right 4 describes the right to services of an appropriate standard, which involves

- services provided with reasonable care and skill;
- services provided that comply with legal, professional, ethical, and other relevant standards;
- services provided in a manner consistent with the consumer's needs;
- services provided in a manner that minimises the potential harm to, and optimises the quality of life of, that consumer;
- co-operation among providers to ensure quality and continuity of services.¹

The professional standards and practice standards describe minimum standards of conduct and competence, and are supported by descriptions of patient expectations and practitioner guidance.

Patient expectations

A description of what a patient can expect when a practitioner meets professional standards.

Guidance

Guidance for the professional standards and practice standards describes the actions and behaviours that enable practitioners to meet the relevant standards.

Guidance is **not** mandatory and a practitioner may choose to meet a professional standard or practice standard with alternative actions to those described in the guidance.

¹ Right 4 of the Code of Health and Disability Service Consumers' Rights.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:

Put patients' interests first**Professional standards**

1

You must ensure the health needs and safe care of patients are your primary concerns

2

You must put the interests of your patients ahead of personal, financial or other gain

3

You must treat patients with dignity and respect at all times

4

You must treat patients fairly and without discrimination, respecting cultural values, personal disabilities and individual differences

5

You must respect patients' autonomy and freedom of choice

6

You must respect patients' right to complain and facilitate resolution

7

You must protect the confidentiality of patient information

**Patient expectations**

Your oral health needs will be prioritised and your oral health practitioner will provide safe dental care

Your oral health practitioner will put your best interests ahead of their own

You will be treated with dignity and respect

You will be treated fairly, without discrimination, and with consideration for your individual needs

Your freedom to choose and make decisions will be respected by your oral health practitioner

You can make a complaint if you are unhappy with the care or treatment you receive from your oral health practitioner who will help to find a resolution

Your oral health practitioner will protect your privacy and keep your information confidential, except in situations where the law requires it to be shared

Practitioner guidance to professional standards 1–7:

- Consider patients' individual needs, values, and backgrounds.
- Do not discriminate against patients by reason of sex, marital status, religious or ethical belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status or sexual orientation; or because of your own political, religious or moral beliefs.
- "Cultural values" are the beliefs common to a particular group of people; culture is not confined to ethnic origin.
- Be aware of cultural diversity when treating people of all cultural backgrounds and treat patients in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Recognise the unique place Māori hold as tangata whenua in New Zealand and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Respect patients' views and preferences, and do not make assumptions about how they want to be treated.
- Respect patients' freedom of choice, including the choice to decline treatment or seek a second opinion.
- You must not coerce a patients' treatment choice for financial purposes, professional development or inappropriate self-gain.
- Facilitate fair and efficient resolution of complaints.
- Ensure patients are aware of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights.
- Protect patient records so information is not revealed to unauthorised staff, patients or members of the public, including when using new technology to support your practice.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:

Ensure safe practice



Professional standards

8

You must practise within your professional knowledge and skills, and offer referral to another health professional where appropriate

9

You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up-to-date through ongoing learning and professional interaction

10

You must maintain appropriate skills and equipment to manage medical emergencies

11

You must maintain accurate, time-bound and up-to-date patient records

12

You must identify and manage health and safety risks within your practice environment



Patient expectations

Your oral health practitioner will work within their knowledge and capabilities and offer to arrange referrals where appropriate

Your oral health practitioner will continually update their knowledge and skills to provide safe, effective care

Your oral health practitioner has the skills and equipment needed to manage a medical emergency

Your oral health practitioner will keep accurate and up-to-date records of the care provided to you

Your oral health care will be provided in a safe environment

Practitioner guidance to professional standards 8–12:

- Recognise your own limitations and the special skills of others in diagnosis, prevention and treatment.
- Where referral is appropriate, it might be to another oral health practitioner, other health professional or support agency.
- Comply with Dental Council's annual recertification programme.
- When integrating new technology within your practice, apply your professional knowledge to assessments, diagnosis, treatment, and holistic patient care.
- Ensure you have the appropriate understanding and training before you start using new technology.
- Check patient records for accuracy and completeness, including when records have been prepared using new technology.
- Identify and take reasonable steps to manage health and safety risks within your control. This may include knowing who the health and safety officer is, raising concerns, following workplace policies, and reporting risks where they cannot be addressed directly.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:

Communicate effectively



Professional standards

13

You must communicate honestly and provide accurate, factual information without exaggeration

14

You must listen to your patients and consider their preferences and concerns

15

You must give patients the information they need or request, in a way they can understand, so they can make informed decisions

16

You must ensure informed consent always remains valid

17

You must communicate effectively with others to coordinate and support patient care

18

You must behave respectfully in communication to and about your colleagues, other health professionals, and health related organisations



Patient expectations

Your oral health practitioner will communicate with you honestly and provide clear, accurate information

Your oral health practitioner will listen carefully to your concerns and preferences and take them into account in your care

Your oral health practitioner will share information in a way you can understand, so you can make informed decisions about your care

Your oral health practitioner will check that you understand and agree to care as it progresses or changes

Your oral health practitioner will communicate effectively and coordinate with others to support your care

Your oral health practitioner will communicate respectfully with other health practitioners and within the health sector

Practitioner guidance to professional standards 13–18:

- Ensure all information, including any health claims or images used in any communications with the public or patients, including social media or advertising, is accurate, factual, and not misleading.
- Recognise communication barriers and meet patients' individual communication needs.
- Before providing a virtual consultation, check your patient can access and use the digital platform, and that this method will not create communication barriers.
- Give your patients the opportunity to discuss their preferences and concerns with you and encourage patients to ask questions.
- Confirm your patients' understanding of the information given to them and allow them the time they need to make an informed decision.
- Giving and obtaining informed consent is an ongoing process of communication between patients and all members of the dental team involved in patient care and should be revisited where circumstances change.
- If a patient lacks the ability to make decisions, whether due to age or illness, information may need to be shared with the patient's guardian or substitute decision-maker to support informed decision-making on the patient's behalf.
- Before using emerging technologies in patient care, explain how it will be used, its limitations and obtain your patient's consent. For example, the use of artificial intelligence, remote patient monitoring technology, or virtual consultations.
- When there is a request for information or making a referral, provide detailed and accurate patient records to the health provider involved in your patient's care in a timely manner.
- Ensure data safety and security when sharing health information with other health professionals or service providers.
- When using an artificial intelligence tool a practitioner needs to understand how the tool collects, stores and uses patient data so they can assess if the tool is consistent with relevant privacy obligations. Links to other helpful resources are available in Council's guidance on responsible use of artificial intelligence in oral health practice, available [here](#).
- Treat your colleagues and those you engage with in a professional setting courteously, respectfully and reasonably in all forms of communication – verbal or written, or in any public media – including social media.
- Respect the right of your colleagues and patients to hold different views.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:

Provide good care**Professional standards**

19

You must provide clinically justified care that considers a person's overall health and wellbeing, and is based on the best available evidence

20

You must take responsibility for the assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and care you provide including when you rely on external advice, technologies, and services directly related to the care

21

You must collaborate with others to facilitate appropriate care

22

You must promote the oral health needs of the community

**Patient expectations**

Your oral health practitioner will provide care that meets your needs, taking into account your overall health and wellbeing, and the best available evidence

Your oral health practitioner will take responsibility for your assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and care, including when using emerging technologies or external advice

Your oral health practitioner will collaborate with others to help achieve good outcomes

Your oral health practitioner will act in the public's best interest

Practitioner guidance to professional standards 19–22:

- Provide patients with oral health advice and treatment options relevant to their situation. This includes considering the patient's overall health, their psychological and social situation, their oral health needs (immediate and long term), and desired outcomes.
- Carefully balance the patient's oral health needs with their wishes, and be able to explain your approach to care, which may include declining to treat.
- Clinical justification involves the ongoing evaluation of treatment outcomes as part of professional accountability and is particularly important when treatment occurs over an extended period.
- Radiographs should be individually prescribed when there is a clear, documented clinical justification. Dental radiology requirements are described on the [Ministry of Health website](#).
- Prescribing should follow principles for quality and safe prescribing. National principles for prescribing practice can be found on the [Dental Council website](#).
- Assess treatment outcomes at regular intervals to determine whether treatment should continue, change, or stop, and whether referral to another health practitioner is appropriate.
- Use the best available evidence to inform your care, drawing on scientific research where available, or, where evidence is limited, a strong theoretical rationale, suggestive evidence, or the opinions of respected authorities.
- You remain responsible for clinical decisions when using artificial intelligence tools. This may involve overriding digital outputs to ensure they are accurate and appropriate for the individual patient.
- Further guidance on responsible use of artificial intelligence in oral health practice can be found on the [Dental Council website](#).
- Work effectively with your colleagues, health practitioners, and others to provide appropriate care to patients.
- Respect the contribution of all team members involved in patients' care.
- If your personal position on any aspect of oral health differs from that of the relevant profession, inform your patients and the public of this fact and of the extent to which your position differs from the collectively held view.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE:

Maintain public trust and confidence**Professional standards**

23

You must act with honesty and integrity to ensure your professional and personal conduct enables trust in you and your profession

24

You must be familiar and comply with your legal and professional obligations

25

You must maintain appropriate boundaries in your interactions with patients, colleagues and the public

26

You must protect the interests of patients and colleagues from any risk of harm posed by your health, competence or conduct, or that of a colleague or an employee

**Patient expectations**

Your oral health practitioner will act with honesty and integrity

Your oral health practitioner will meet their legal and professional obligations

Your oral health practitioner will maintain appropriate boundaries, so you feel safe and comfortable receiving oral health care

Your oral health practitioner will protect your interests, provide safe care, and take action if they are concerned about a colleague or employee's ability to do the same

Practitioner guidance to professional standards 23–26:

- You are always a professional. Treat all team members, colleagues, patients and members of the public fairly, with respect and in accordance with the law, in all personal and professional dealings.
- Do not make malicious or unfounded criticisms of colleagues or patients that may undermine patients' trust in the care or treatment they receive, or the profession.
- Be honest and open in dealings with patients, employers, insurers or other organisations and individuals.
- Understand that laws and regulations may change and it is your responsibility to keep up to date with those affecting your work.
- Inform the Dental Council immediately if a matter arises that could impact on your fitness to practise, such as a significant health condition, an investigation into your practice or conduct (in New Zealand or overseas), criminal proceedings, or a conviction.
- Co-operate fully with any investigatory or legal processes and be honest and accurate in your responses.
- Address issues with colleagues in a collaborative, supportive manner and elevate if necessary.
- Do not take advantage of your position as an oral health professional in your interactions with patients and the public.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries in all interactions, including avoiding inappropriate personal, financial, or social relationships.
- If you are an employer of a practitioner who resigns or is dismissed from their employment for reasons relating to competence, you are required to notify the Dental Council.²
- If you know, or suspect, that patients or colleagues may be at risk because of your health³, competence or conduct, or that of a colleague or an employee, you have a professional obligation to inform the Dental Council.
- Mental and physical health conditions may include substance use disorders (including addictions). Seek appropriate medical advice as soon as possible.

² Section 34 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

³ Section 45 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

