

June 3, 2024

Law Enforcement Services

Re: Request for Vulnerable Sector Check

The individual requesting a vulnerable sector check (VSC) through your agency is on the General Register of the Alberta College of Dental Hygienists (ACDH). Under Alberta's *Health Professions Act* (HPA), a person must hold General registration and a practice permit if they intend to practice dental hygiene in Alberta for any portion of the year.

Dental hygienists in Alberta work independently, meaning that they do not work under the direct supervision or oversight of another health professional, and are fully accountable for the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and billing of their patients. Additionally, dental hygienists may own and operate independent dental hygiene practices, either providing services in a traditional clinic setting or their own homes, or providing mobile services to patients in their homes, in long term care facilities, or remote locations where there is no dentist available. Furthermore, some dental hygiene patients may be under sedation while receiving treatment, further increasing their vulnerability and enhancing the power imbalance.

Regardless of the setting, as per section 3.6 of the [ACDH Code of Ethics](#), dental hygienists must uphold the patient's autonomy and informed choice by "recognizing the inherent power differences between the dental hygienist and the patient and refrain from misusing that power to influence the patient's choice."

A dental hygienist's unique education, knowledge, and skills, along with their access to a patient's private information creates an inherent power imbalance in the patient-professional relationship. This uniqueness places them in a position of trust and authority over not only their vulnerable patients, but all of their patients.

Recognizing that registrants will be in a position of trust and authority over their patients, the ACDH Council passed a motion on December 10, 2021, requiring registrants to provide a VSC as part of the practice permit renewal process. Registered dental hygienists on the General Register renew their practice permit annually and are required to obtain and provide the College with a VSC every three (3) years.

This requirement aligns with the mandate of the College to protect the public from unsafe practice and hold dental hygienists accountable for the care that they provide.

The College holds all registrant information, including VSC documents and the information on them, in the strictest confidence. As per the [ACDH Privacy Statement](#), registrant information and documentation is not shared with third parties unless required by law.

Any questions regarding this registration requirement can be directed to registration@acdh.ca or 780-465-1756, ext. 2.

Thank you,



Amie Dowell, MPH
Registrar & CEO