



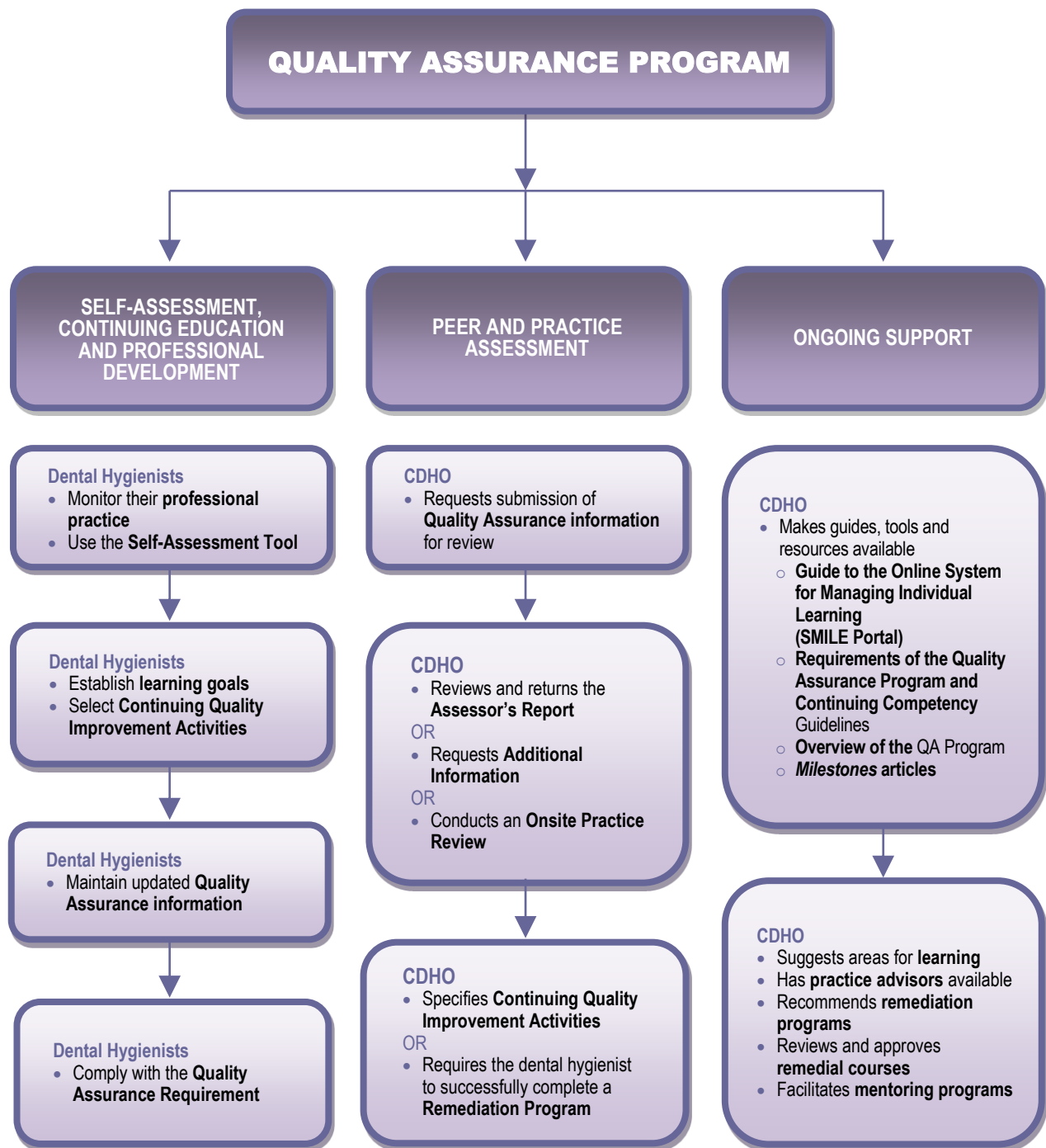
College of  
**Dental Hygienists**  
of Ontario

*Protecting your health and your smile*

## **Overview of the 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.

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

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

The primary focus of the Quality Assurance Program is to ensure that clients receive quality care from all registered dental hygienists. Mechanisms have been 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 are responsible for demonstrating competency by participating in the Quality Assurance Program.

**Every dental hygienist must provide the College with sufficient evidence of participation in the Quality Assurance Program by completing the Self-Assessment Tool by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the year for which the self-assessment applies.** The Self-Assessment Tool will help dental hygienists assess their dental hygiene practices and identify learning goals that will direct their continuing education, professional development and Continuing Quality Improvement Activities.

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## 2. Peer and Practice Assessment

Dental hygienists demonstrate that they continue to have the knowledge, skills, and judgment required to practise dental hygiene in a safe and competent manner by fulfilling the requirements of one of three assessment options. Each option contains two components, one to assess the dental hygienist's knowledge and a second to assess their skills and judgment. Knowledge is assessed either by the completion of a *Learning Portfolio* or a written assessment administered by the *National Dental Hygiene Certification Board*. Assessment of the dental hygienist's skills and judgment is assessed by the completion of a *Practice Profile* or through an onsite practice review. A full description of all components may be found in the [Requirements of the Quality Assurance Program and Guidelines for Continuing Competency](#).

The contents of the dental hygienist's Quality Assurance submissions are confidential. **When CDHO requests a dental hygienist's Quality Assurance information, only authorized personnel will have access to this information.**

The Quality Assurance Committee reviews selected dental hygienists' Quality Assurance information on an annual basis. Selection for the review is based on criteria specified by the Committee and published on the College's website at least three months before the registrant is selected on the basis of that criteria, by stratified random sample using pre-determined demographic criteria or by request, where a member's records do not show that the member has participated in the program by completing the Self-Assessment Tool. If a review of a dental hygienist's submitted information by the Quality Assurance Committee determines that the assessment criteria/guidelines for the demonstration of competency have not been met, or if concerns are identified from other information before it and where an onsite review has not already taken place, the Committee may direct a review of the dental hygienist's practice at her/his practice location.

After considering the dental hygienist's submissions, assessor reports, written assessment results and/or any other available information, the Committee 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.

Practice enhancement/remediation activities are required for dental hygienists found deficient in their knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment as identified through their assessment. Required courses or remedial activities will be identified by the Quality Assurance Committee to correct the identified deficiencies and/or enhance their practice. Successful completion of these activities is required as specified in the Quality Assurance Regulation. The dental hygienist is responsible for any costs associated with practice enhancement/remediation activities.

In circumstances where the Committee determines that the dental hygienist's knowledge, skills, judgment or attitudes are unsatisfactory 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.

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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:

- [Quality Assurance Regulation and Policies and Procedures Manual](#)
- Overview of the Quality Assurance Program
- [Requirements of the Quality Assurance Program and Guidelines for Continuing Competency](#)
- Self-Assessment Tool
- [Guide to the Online System for Managing Individual Learning \(SMILE Portal\)](#)
- 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.