



Standard of Practice: Accepting New Patients (2022)

A **Standard of Practice** is the minimum standard of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected by the College on a specific issue.

Accepting New Patients

Preamble

Access to physician services is a concern for the public and the profession. When deciding whether to accept a new patient, physicians must ensure their decision is fair and non-discriminatory.

Standard of Practice

In the selection of new patients, physicians must ensure that access to medical care for patients is fair and non-discriminatory.

Discrimination

Physicians are bound by the [Human Rights Act, 2010](#) (as amended) which prohibits discrimination regarding provision of, or access to, services or facilities.

The following grounds of discrimination are not acceptable reasons for denial of a patient into a medical practice: race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, social origin, religious creed, religion, age, disability, disfigurement, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status, source of income and political opinion.

Patient Selection Process

Physicians who are able to accept new patients into their practice should use a First-Come, First-Served approach. Decisions to accept or refuse new patients must be made in good faith.

The College defines a “First-Come, First-Served Approach” as an approach whereby new patients are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, when the patient’s needs are within the physicians:

- experience, expertise, and clinical competence;
- area of practice; and/or
- scope of practice, as determined by any conditions or restrictions on the physician’s licence.

A physician who restricts or selects patients for their practice for any reason must establish a selection process which is clearly articulated to the prospective patient. The selection criteria for accepting patients must be relevant to the physician’s clinical competence and medical practice and to a patient’s health care needs.

Decisions not to accept an individual as a patient should be conveyed respectfully and honestly.

Potential Exceptions to First-Come, First-Served Approach

Physicians are permitted to depart from the First-Come, First-Served approach to prioritize access to care for higher need and/or complex patients. Decisions to prioritize a patient’s access to care must be made in good faith.

Physicians must use their professional judgment to determine whether prioritizing or triaging patients based on need is appropriate, taking into account the patient’s health care needs and factors that may influence the patient’s health outcomes.

The College acknowledges that caring for patients and their immediate family members may assist in the provision of quality care. Accordingly, where a family physician’s practice is otherwise closed, physicians are permitted to prioritize the immediate family members of current patients.

Medical Questionnaires

Physicians must not use ‘meet and greet’ appointments and/or medical questionnaires to vet prospective patients and determine whether to accept them into their practice. Physicians are permitted to use ‘meet and greet’ appointments and/or medical questionnaires to share information about the practice and obtain information about the patient after a patient has been accepted into a practice.

Acknowledgements

CPSO (2017) Accepting New Patients

McCurry, T.M. Jr. & Kasdan, M.L. (2006). Patient selection. *Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 5(2), 217-223.

Related Documents

[Human Rights Act, 2010, SNL 2010 Chapter H-13.1](#)

Document History

Approved by Council	March 11, 2017
Reviewed & Updated	June 18, 2022
Expected Review Date	June 18, 2027
Publication Date	June 29, 2022