



Nova Scotia Regulator

OF

DENTISTRY AND DENTAL ASSISTING

**Standard of Practice for Advertising and
Marketing in Dental Practice**

1.0 Preamble

The intent of this standard is to protect the public interest and to ensure that advertising and marketing by dentists do not demean the integrity and dignity of the dental profession, thereby risking the public's trust in dentistry.

The terms "advertising" and "marketing" in relation to the dental profession must be taken in their broadest sense and include all those methods by which NSRDDA registrants are made known to the public.

Registrants have the right to present relevant dental practice information to the public in order that the public is better able to make informed choices concerning dental care.

Advertising and marketing by an NSRDDA registrant must be done within the parameters outlined in the NSRDDA *Standard of Practice for Advertising in Dental Practice* (the "Advertising Standard"). Each registrant is responsible for their own conduct as well as all information disseminated on behalf of their practice.

Throughout this document, the term "registrant" shall be taken to mean "registrant and/or dental professional corporation".

2.0 Advertising Permissions

2.1 Advertising and marketing by a registrant must:

- a) be accurate and not false, fraudulent, ambiguous, or likely to be confusing, misleading or deceptive,
- b) be capable of being proven to be true by facts independent of personal feelings, beliefs, opinions or interpretations,
- c) be of a dignified nature, in good taste, so as to uphold the dignity, honour and ethics of the profession and not bring the dentist or profession into disrepute,
- d) not contain comparisons with another practice or registrant, and avoid suggestions of uniqueness or superiority over another practice or registrant,
- e) not refer to the quality of service to be provided,
- f) be directed to the general public and not at an individual member of the public other than current patients¹ of record, and
- g) be relevant to the public's ability to make an informed choice. Such relevant public information includes:
 - i) the name of the dental office,
 - ii) an office address, contact information, website address, and social media details,
 - iii) a registrant's proper name
 - iv) a registrant's professional description,
 - v) any academic degrees, certifications, or designations related to the requirements for their licensing category,
 - vi) office hours,
 - vii) languages spoken,
 - viii) universal symbols such as the symbols for wheelchair accessibility, "VISA", and "Interac", and
 - ix) services and treatment available (subject to the stipulations below).

¹ Throughout this document, the term "patient" is interchangeable with the term "client" as presented in the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)* and the *Regulated Health Professions General Regulations*.

3.0 Advertising and Marketing Violations

3.1 Without limitation, advertising or marketing violates section 2.0 if it:

- a) is calculated or likely to take advantage of the weakened state, either physical, mental or emotional, of the recipient or intended recipient,
- b) appeals to the public's fears,
- c) is likely to create in the mind of the recipient or intended recipient an unjustified expectation about results which the registrant can achieve,
- d) includes testimonials²,
- e) implies that the registrant can obtain results not achievable by other registrants,
- f) compares the quality of services provided by the registrant with those provided by another registrant or office, or
- g) is in contravention of sections 4.0 or 5.0.

4.0 Advertising of Fees and Promotions

4.1 A registrant who, in advertising or marketing, includes a statement of fees for a specific service:

- a) must ensure that the statement sufficiently describes the fees and services so as to enable the recipient or intended recipient to understand the nature and extent of the services to be performed or provided and the cost to the patient,
- b) must not, in the advertisement, compare the fees charged by the registrant with those charged by another registrant, and
- c) must ensure that, unless otherwise specified, the advertised fee would be the maximum fee inclusive of all services, including laboratory costs. The advertised fee would be applicable to all patients, whether or not they were aware of the advertisement and whether or not they had dental insurance coverage.

4.2 Registrants' advertisements must not include inducements such as giveaways, contests, draws, or free/discounted goods or services (except in relation to pro bono services, or services provided to low income patients who would not otherwise have access to care).

4.3 Registrants must not create or participate in rewards programs aimed at promoting a particular treatment.

²Testimonial: a statement testifying to benefits received (Merriam-Webster)

5.0 Dental Specialties and Areas of Practice

- 5.1 A dentist must not use the title “specialist” or any similar designation suggesting a recognized special status or accreditation on any letterhead or business card or in any other print or digital marketing unless that person is registered and licensed in Nova Scotia as a specialist in a dental specialty identified in the NSRDDA Bylaws.
- 5.2 A dentist must not include in their advertising and marketing, or on any letterhead or business card, academic degrees, certifications, or designations not related to the requirements for their license category.
- 5.3 Dentists who limit their practices to certain branches or areas of dentistry may state in any marketing the branch or area to which their practice is limited but must indicate whether they are a general dentist or a specialist, and if a specialist, which specialty.
- 5.4 Dentists who have an interest or additional training in certain branches or areas of dentistry may state in any marketing the branch(es) or area(s) of interest/training but must indicate whether they are a general dentist or a specialist, and if a specialist, which specialty.

6.0 Retention of Marketing Material

- 6.1 Registrants must retain a copy of any advertisement or other marketing material for one year after the date of publication or broadcast, and must, upon request, provide to the registrar, the complaints committee or the professional conduct committee:
 - a) a copy of any publication, including a publication made using telephone or computer-based media,
 - b) a recording of any broadcast, including a broadcast made on radio or television or using computer-based media, and
 - c) a written record of when and where the publication or broadcast was made.

7.0 Miscellaneous

- 7.1 A registrant may only speak on behalf of the NSRDDA with the express authorization of the registrar or board.
- 7.2 A registrant must not include the NSRDDA logo in any communications or promotional materials without the express authorization of the registrar or board.
- 7.3 A registrant may only endorse as a registrant a product or service for sale to the public, whether for reward or not, if the product or service relates directly to the practice of the dentistry.

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The development of this standard was informed by the *Advertising Standards Regulations* pursuant to the *Dental Act S.N.S. 1992* as well as documents produced by the British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP), the Royal College of Dentists of Ontario (RCDSO), and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS).

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