

Regulatory Colleges & Continuing Competence Programs

Regulated members may have encountered the word 'competence' frequently in recent communications from ACSLPA. We want to avoid 'competence' becoming just a buzzword at the College and help our regulated members develop a good understanding of competence and what it means in their practice. This article provides insight into what it means when we talk about 'competence' and why the College plays a role in monitoring the competence of regulated members with the Continuing Competence Program (CCP).

What is Competence? Competence is defined in the *Health Professions Act (HPA)* as "the combined knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment required to provide professional services". Competence, therefore, relates to one's ability to practice and to remain up to date with developments in one's profession. Using these definitions, it is easy to see the importance for regulatory bodies, like ACSLPA, to have systems in place to ensure regulated members are competent to practice. Doing so helps the College meet its overarching mandate to protect the public, by ensuring its regulated members have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgement to offer safe and ethical services. In fact, all regulatory healthcare Colleges in Alberta are required by the HPA to establish and maintain continuing competence programs which provide for "regulated members to maintain competence and enhance the provision of professional services".

ACSLPA wants to do more than just 'tick the box' with our CCP. We want to implement a program that meets the public protection mandate and is meaningful to our regulated members. While different Colleges take different approaches to their CCPs, ACSLPA's approach is to promote regulated member participation in activities that have been shown in the literature to maintain and enhance competence— completing continuing education, connecting with peers and colleagues for feedback and practice advice, and being aware of the risks to their competence and putting supports in place to mitigate those risks. ACSLPA's CCP is not an evaluation of regulated members' workplace performance, but of the steps taken to maintain and enhance their competence. It helps assure the public that they can expect competent care when receiving services from an SLP or audiologist in Alberta.

We understand that completing the CCP takes time and effort. This might seem like a corrective, or disciplinary, task to some members; however, that is not the intention of the program. The College operates the CCP under the assumption that most regulated members are competent to practice and are taking steps to remain competent. The CCP has been developed to allow members to reflect on their competence and to document what they are doing to prevent competence drift. Our aim with the CCP is that the effort required of regulated members to complete the CCP and the assessment of their participation in the program are proportionate to the level of risk to the public.

Renewal season starts in October and will require the completion of the new CCP for members renewing to the general register (that is, wanting a permit to practice in 2023). Plenty of materials are available for you to tour around the CCP and ensure you have the information you need to complete it. As fall approaches, the frequency of email communications from ACSLPA will increase to match the busyness of the season. For additional updates, follow us on Instagram and Facebook. As always, please call the office or email our outstanding practice advisors with any questions you might have (slp@acslpa.ca and audiology@acslpa.ca).

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