

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Contracts of Supervision for Clinical and Physician Assistants

Supervision in practice

Can a PA/CIA practice if they work with a group of rotating physicians and have no primary supervising physician?

This question is answered by reading the contract of supervision.

PAs/CIAs are only permitted to practice in accordance with an approved Practice Description supervised in accordance with the terms of an approved Contract of Supervision.

At all times the PA/CIA is practicing, the Primary Supervisor or an Alternative Supervisor designated in accordance with the contract of supervision must be available to fulfill their supervisory role, even when the PA/CIA is practicing under the immediate supervision of an Additional Supervisor in a departmental or program setting.

Only physicians in a rotating group who are signatories to the Contract of Supervision could fulfill a supervisory role.

Can a PA/CIA work with physicians or other health care professionals who are not signatories to the Contract of Supervision (i.e., responsible supervising physician(s)).

Depending on the wording of the practice description, this is generally acceptable and encouraged. The work in this sense would be considered collaborative rather than a supervisory relationship. It remains the case the PA/CIA would be required to be under supervision by someone in accordance with the terms of their Contract of Supervision while practicing.

As an example, a PA working in a health care facility under the remote supervision of their Primary Supervisor can work with other physicians in that health care facility in a collaborative way. Physicians who are not named as supervisors in the Contract of Supervision are not able to act as the “responsible supervising physician”, as this phrase is described in the Contract of Supervision. A notable limitation in this scenario is that the PA is always limited in their scope of practice by the responsible supervising physician(s).

Can a PA/CIA engage in their professional practice outside the scope of the practice description at the request of a responsible supervising physician?

No, all areas of work need to be included on the Practice Description. The Practice Description could be broadened to include potential areas of work; however, such amendment would require approval from the Registrar. Alternatively, two Contracts of Supervision may be created.

Those entering a Contract of Supervision must be diligent in ensuring the associated practice description captures the intended scope of practice.

If a PA/CIA is certified in ACLS/ATLS, etc. and the responsible supervising physician(s) is/are not, can they practice those skills?

No. At least one responsible supervising physician (i.e., a supervisor who is actively supervising) must be competent to perform the medical function they are supervising. This is a fundamental component of the regulatory scheme established for PAs and CIAs.

If a family medicine HMO is working in an acute care setting, is the PA/CIA bound by the HMOs professional practice or by the PA/CIAs

The PA/CIA is bound in their professional practice by the following, in hierarchical order:

1. their approved Contract of Supervision and Practice Description; and
2. the professional practice of the responsible supervising physician(s).

In a departmental or program setting, sometimes the PA/CIA will be working under multiple responsible supervising physicians concurrently. For example, they may be working under the active supervision of their Primary Supervisor and one or more Additional Supervisors. The PA/CIAs permitted scope of practice will be limited by the responsible supervising physician(s). In this example:

- Subject to their Practice Description, the PA/CIA would be able to practice to the extent of the scope of their Primary Supervisor's professional practice and the work they do in that respect would be considered supervised by the Primary Supervisor. The Primary Supervisor would be the responsible supervising physician for the medical function being performed.
- They would also be able to practice to the extent of the scope of practice of an actively supervising Additional Supervisor (e.g., an HMO). The Additional Supervisor would be the responsible supervising physician for the medical function being performed in that regard.

If the HMO is the only responsible supervising physician, then the professional practice of the PA/CIA would be bound by the HMO's scope of practice.

Contract of supervision

Who is responsible for submitting changes to the Contract of Supervision, the Primary Supervisor or the PA/CIA?

It is the responsibility of both. It should be a collaborative exercise.

Does the Contract of Supervision need to be received by CPSM before the PA/CIA can work with a new physician?

If by work, this question means 'be supervised by', then the answer is yes. Supervision is only permitted when it is pursuant to a Contract of Supervision that is approved and in force.

Contracts of Supervision can be signed electronically to make the process more efficient. The Contract of Supervision and Practice Description must be approved by the Registrar before the PA/CIA can commence practice.

Can a PA/CIA decline to add an Alternate/Additional Supervisor to their Contract of Supervision?

All parties must be in agreement with respect to the Contract of Supervision. A PA/CIA may refuse to enter into a CoS with a specific supervisor. The employment ramifications of such a decision are not controlled by CPSM.

Practice Description

Does professional practice refer to non-medical functions (e.g., administrative functions such as billing)?

The scope of the PA/CIA's professional practice for the purpose of the Contract of Supervision and the Practice Description is detailed in the applicable Practice Description. This includes functions that involve an exercise of medical skill, knowledge, and judgment. Strictly administrative tasks or other non-medical functions would be considered separate employment issues about which the College is not concerned vis-à-vis the Practice Description. Such components of an employment arrangement should not find their way into a CPSM Practice Description. Medical Administration that requires an exercise of medical skill, knowledge, and judgement should be covered in the Practice Description.

If a PA/CIA is required to see patients in the patients' homes, how should that be indicated on the Contract of Supervision?

Home visits should be clearly indicated as part of the duties in the Practice Description. Each individual address does not need to be listed on the Contract of Supervision. The Contract of Supervision would need to include the practice location(s) out of which the PA/CIA is working. For example, this could be the primary practice location of the Primary Supervisor. The Practice Description would need to clearly describe the nature of home visits and how often they occur. This would be considered part of the overall practice setting.

Is the need for 8 hours of on-site supervision per month decreased if the PA/CIA has a low EFT or casual position?

In exceptional circumstances, the Registrar may reduce the number of hours required for on-site supervision. This may occur, for example, where the PA/CIA is working under multiple similar Contracts of Supervision. However, the general rule is that a minimum of 8 hours on site supervision will be required.

Are the workload and expectations of PA/CIAs documented?

In general, expectations, including related to workload, must be described in the Practice Description. All members are reminded they must comply with the 'Volume of Service' standard at Schedule I to the College's Standards of Practice of Medicine.

Is the goal to change the Practice Description to be more like medical directives used in Ontario?

No.

Evaluation and CPSM reporting

Will all the PA/CIAs be placed at the beginning of the "Evaluation and Performance" timeline when they are transitioned to the new CoS?

No. If a PA/CIA is working under the same Practice Description with the same supervisor(s), the transition to the new Contract of Supervision alone should not impact the assistant's position on the reporting schedule. Where there is a material change, evaluation may reset.

If a PA/CIA has a new Primary Supervisor, but same Practice Description, will the PA/CIA be placed at the start of the “Evaluation and Performance” timeline?

One important aspect of the performance evaluation is that the Primary Supervisor will gain insight into the PA/CIA’s level of skill, knowledge, and judgment. Therefore, the full extent of evaluation will generally be required. However, the Registrar may grant a request for reduced evaluation in exceptional circumstances based on a written request from the Primary Supervisor and PA/CIA.

What is this reporting schedule based upon?

CPSM requires regular reporting from Primary Supervisors respecting the practice of a PA/CIA. This is considered an important means for oversight of the supervisory relationship between the PA/CIA and the Primary Supervisor over time.

A template for reporting is available on CPSM’s website, though the Primary Supervisor may develop their own format that is satisfactory to the Registrar. CPSM’s template follows CanMeds competencies. The specific reporting schedule is based on the format used for other classes of registration regulated by CPSM that has proven satisfactory.

Can PA/CIAs access their “Evaluation and Performance review?”

It is expected that the Primary Supervisor will share and review evaluations with the PA/CIA. This is an important aspect of continuing professional development. A notation from both the Primary Supervisor and the PA/CIA should be entered on the evaluation to indicate a review took place prior to submission of the report to CPSM. This notation should include whether consensus was reached on the comments made in the evaluation.

Will there be a section in the new Practice Description outlining training periods for new PA/CIAs?

It is the intent that the Primary Supervisor will be responsible for training PA/CIAs. The practice description will set out what is thought to be prudent.

Is there a process for the PA/CIA to evaluate Supervising Physician(s)?

There is no formal evaluation process for supervisors by the PA/CIA. However, CPSM expects supervisors to strictly comply with the Contract of Supervision and Practice Description. Concerns in this regard should be brought to the attention of the relevant supervisor or the Primary Supervisor by the PA/CIA. Significant concerns may also be reported to CPSM.

Members are reminded of the overarching reporting obligations in this regard. CPSM may consider an evaluation process for supervisors by the PA/CIA in future.

If the PA/CIA is hired into a half time EFT, should “Evaluation and Performance” reviews be on a monthly basis?

The Evaluation process set out in the applicable Practice Description must be followed.

Delegation

Can a PA delegate reserved acts?

No, they cannot.

Delegation by a regulated health professional allows the recipient of the delegation to perform a reserved act they would not otherwise be permitted to perform under the RHPA. Delegation is a regulated process under the RHPA and requires assessment and monitoring on the part of the delegator. PAs/CIAs are not permitted to delegate reserved acts.

Per subsection 5.16(1) of the College’s General Regulation, a regulated associate member — *other than an assessment candidate member or an educational (resident) or (resident-limited) member* — **must not delegate the performance of a reserved act.**

A PA/CIA may perform a reserved act only if the PA/CIA receives authorization from their supervisor to perform the reserved act and is supervised by a regulated member who is legally permitted and competent to perform the reserved act.

A PA may provide direct, onsite supervision for a PA student in accordance with section 5.19 of the College’s General Regulation if they themselves are legally permitted and competent to perform the reserved act. This is not equivalent to delegation.

Delegation is different from collaboration and/or authorization in a health care setting. For example, a PA/CIA can write an order to another health care professional, for example a nurse, requesting that person to perform a reserved act. However, for the recipient of the order to perform that act, they would have to be entitled to do so in their own right under the RHPA. In this scenario, the recipient is being asked to do something they can do; it is not a delegation that requires supervision.

It is noted the registered nurse regulation under the RHPA does not permit registered nurses to delegate the performance of any of their reserved acts to any other regulated profession

nor can registered nurses accept delegations from any other regulated profession including physicians. If the task or skill is within the nurse's own scope of practice, then delegation is not required. For more information, see [DELEGATION by PHYSICIANS Under the Regulated Health Professions Act.](#)