

COUNCIL POSITION STATEMENT
ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
EXPECTATIONS WITH CHANGES
TO FEDERAL CANNABIS
LEGISLATION EFFECTIVE
OCTOBER 17TH, 2018



Council

COLLEGE & ASSOCIATION OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS OF ALBERTA

Council Position Statement on Professional Practice Expectations with Changes to Federal Cannabis Legislation effective October 17th, 2018

Council believes that most professional practice settings for regulated members are considered to be safety sensitive. A safety-sensitive job is one in which incapacity due to drug or alcohol impairment could result in direct and significant risk of injury to the employee, others or the environment.¹ Two of the many examples where registered respiratory therapists are directly involved in a high-risk operation during patient care are administration of compressed gases and managing mechanical ventilators. The council also recognizes that there is limited high quality medical evidence regarding the effective use of cannabis to treat medical conditions at this time.

It is the position of the Council that all regulated members:

1. be advised that there is zero tolerance by the complaints director for any regulated member practicing while under the influence of the effects of cannabis use or consumption;
2. be it for medical reasons, or for recreational purposes, or because of an underlying disability, it is unacceptable to be unfit for duty. Regarding changes, what changes is to what extent the employer has a duty to accommodate and go through the accommodation process;
3. review and fully comply with their respective employer's policy regarding cannabis or drug use in the workplace or prior to arrival at the workplace;
4. disclose to their employer any addiction to cannabis and discuss accommodation mechanisms if appropriate;
5. review the details of their liability insurance policy or employer's liability insurance policy responding on their behalf to confirm whether the liability insurance coverage will respond on their behalf if they are impaired by or under the influence of cannabis while providing health services in a safety-sensitive workplace providing patient care;
6. review their personal investment portfolios to consider whether their holdings contain cannabis related investments that may place them in a conflict of interest position given their practice setting and the nature of the health services they provide to patients;
7. be aware that cannabis is quite different than alcohol, with respect to metabolism due to cannabis being fat soluble and as such it impacts people very differently than alcohol which is not fat soluble. The duration of action of cannabis on an individual is much longer than alcohol;

¹ Canadian Human Rights Commission Policy on Alcohol and Drug Testing, June, 2002.

8. be aware of the safe levels of cannabis in the blood for purpose of safely operating a motor vehicle particularly in community-based care and homecare practice settings;
9. immediately advise the complaints director if they are convicted by any court of being impaired while operating a motor vehicle;
10. be informed about employee assistance programs offered by your employer and actively participate if you believe you are negatively affected by cannabis consumption;
11. be advised that council expects fair and reasonable decisions pertaining to cannabis use with a balance of interests for safety, labor law, privacy and human rights in all clinical and or hearing tribunal situations;
12. be advised that individuals have human rights and constitutional rights, however, those rights are not absolutely guaranteed and may be subject to certain reasonable limits by legislation if the limit is in the public interest such as protection and serving the public interest in section 3 of the *Health Professions Act*.