

FAQS ON PROPOSED AMENDMENT – DESIGNATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

A [temporary website](#) with information about the amalgamation of the seven colleges in the period leading up to amalgamation (June 28, 2024) has launched. The website features a [news section](#), and a dedicated page for registrants that includes [Frequently Asked Questions specific to registrant concerns](#).

What does designation mean?

Designation is different from regulation. Under the *Health Professions Act* (“HPA”), a proposed new health profession must first be “designated” before it becomes regulated by a regulatory college. Regulatory colleges are given the authority under the HPA to oversee the practice of a designated health profession in the public interest, and are responsible for establishing, monitoring, and enforcing standards of practice and ethics, establishing registration requirements, investigating complaints regarding the conduct or competence of individual registrants, and conducting discipline hearings. If the Health Professions Designation and Amalgamation Regulation (the “Regulation”) is amended to designate “psychotherapy” as a health profession, persons who practice psychotherapy will then become regulated by a regulatory college at a future date yet to be determined.

What is psychotherapy?

Persons who are competent to perform psychotherapy treat mental disorders or other mental health-related problems resulting in a patient’s psychological suffering. Certain types of counsellors have the education and competency to perform psychotherapy and may include those who use titles such as registered clinical counsellors and counselling therapists.

If psychotherapy is designated under the Regulation, how will this impact occupational therapists who work in mental health?

Some health care professionals who practice psychotherapy, such as psychologists and occupational therapists, are already regulated by existing colleges. These

professionals should **not be impacted** by the designation of psychotherapy as a profession.

Other practitioners who practice psychotherapy but are not currently regulated by a regulatory college (which includes clinical counsellors registered with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors and other health-oriented counsellors and therapists) will be regulated by an existing or new college.

If the definition of “occupational therapy” in the Occupational Therapists Regulation does not include “psychosocial” once finalized, will this impact our scope of practice and capacity to work in mental health settings in BC?

The Ministry of Health has indicated that it does not intend to restrict or otherwise change the existing scope of practice for occupational therapists including those who practise in the area of mental health with this proposed amendment to the Regulation. Based on the information currently available, COTBC does not anticipate that the proposed amendment to the Regulation will change the ability of occupational therapists to provide services in the area of mental health.

What treatment modalities used by OTs working in mental health settings are considered psychotherapy? For example, are cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), and exposure therapy classified as “psychotherapy”.

At this stage, the proposed amendment only seeks to designate psychotherapy as a designated health profession under the HPA. It remains to be seen how the government will define the term “psychotherapy” in a future regulation and whether that definition will overlap with the scope of practice for occupational therapists. It is too early to predict what treatment modalities will be considered as “psychotherapy”.

How can I provide feedback?

The public consultation period will run until June 24, 2024. Please send your input and feedback to the Ministry of Health at PROREGadmin@gov.bc.ca.