



Physical Therapists

Physical Therapist Safety in Clinical Practice

Reissued: April 2026

From time to time, we hear about situations where a licensee feels uncomfortable or unsafe due to patient interactions with the physical therapist, office staff, or other patients in the clinical space. While many of these situations are manageable with good communication and by maintaining appropriate boundaries, there may be instances where the therapeutic relationship cannot be maintained (e.g., abusive or threatening behavior, or when the actions and behaviours of the patient pose safety concerns towards the physical therapist or others within the practice setting).

Staying safe

WorkSafeBC sets out regulation for the workplace. According to [WorkSafeBC](#), “As a worker, you have rights to a safe and healthy workplace, which includes the right to refuse unsafe work”. The College also requires you to practice self-care and attend to your own health and well-being, as maintaining good physical and mental health is a cornerstone of providing safe patient care. As per the CHCPBC Code of Ethics, all licensees have a duty to “take responsibility for their own physical and mental health and refrain from practising physical therapy while their ability to provide appropriate and competent care is compromised”.

Discharging a patient who poses safety concerns

The Practice Standard: Discontinuing Health Services and Ensuring Continuity of Care states that in situations where you feel unsafe providing care, you may discharge the patient without providing for continuity of care if the patient poses a risk of physical, psychological, or financial harm to the licensee or to others involved in the care or services.

If you choose to discharge the patient, be sure to document the reasons for discharge in the patient’s clinical record. You should also communicate these reasons to the patient unless you feel it is unsafe to do so.



More resources

WorkSafeBC may be able to provide additional resources regarding workplace safety, and in extreme cases, it may be necessary to call the police non-emergency (or emergency) number to report concerns.