

Standard of Practice: Supervising Dental Laboratory Technicians

Introduction & Background

The *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA) sets a clear directive for regulators. Section 6 of the RHPA describes the following “objects” of a regulatory body established under the Act:

- (a) protect the public from harm;
- (b) serve and promote the public interest;
- (c) subject to the public interest, preserve the integrity of its profession; and
- (d) maintain public confidence in the ability of the regulatory body to regulate its profession.

As the Nova Scotia Regulator of Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology, and Denturism (NSRDHDTD) is proclaimed under the RHPA, we recognize that there are individuals engaging in the practice of dental technology who are not licensed Dental Technologists. They often work in dental laboratories or denturist clinics. These individuals may or may not have any formalized dental technology education, and, to date, have not been mandated to register with a regulatory body. We acknowledge that these individuals are integral to the delivery of dental technology services in the province, and perform services that fall under the scope of practice for one or more of the oral health professions that the NSRDHDTD regulates.

These individuals will be called Dental Laboratory Technicians (DLTs) and they will be authorized to engage in aspects of dental technology by way of a regulatory process that will grant them a permit. In order for the NSRDHDTD to fulfill the mandate of regulating in the public interest, it has been determined that DLTs must be supervised by a registrant dental hygienist, dental technologist, or denturist when engaged in the practice of dental technology.

Pursuant to the RHPA and the *Regulations Respecting Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology, and Denturism* (the “Regulations”), the NSRDHDTD has been granted the authority to make bylaws establishing a permitting process to allow a non-registrants to engage in practice. Sections 12(2)(d) and (j) of the RHPA state:

- (2) Where permitted under a regulation made under clause 14(c), the board may make bylaws
 - (d) respecting the process and criteria for an applicant, other than a registrant, to engage in practice
 - (j) establishing processes, other than licensing, to permit others to engage in designated aspects of the practice of a profession, including provisions for supervision or other forms of accountability;

It is an NSRDHDTD registrant’s responsibility to ensure that any DLTs that are under their supervision are appropriately supervised at all times.

Who is a Registrant?

A registrant is a person who is registered and licensed with the NSRDHDTD as a practising dental hygienist, dental technologist, or denturist.

Who is a Dental Laboratory Technician?

Anyone engaging in aspects of the scope of practice of dental technology, who is not a registrant of the NSRDHDTD – that is, registered and licensed as a dental hygienist, dental technologist, or denturist needs to apply for a DLT permit.

Often, these are individuals working in dental laboratories or denturist clinics, who fabricate dental prosthetics, but can include anyone who engages in any of the aspects of the scope of practice of dental technology listed below.

As set out in the Regulations:

- (1) The scope of practice of dental technology is the application of specialized and evidence-based dental technology knowledge, skills and judgment that have been taught in an approved education program or are set out in 1 or more of the following approved by the Board:
 - (a) competency frameworks;
 - (b) standards of practice;
 - (c) practice guidelines.
- (2) The scope of practice of dental technology as described in subsection (1) includes the performance of any or all of the following activities:
 - (a) designing, fabricating, altering, repairing and supplying any fixed or removable prosthetic or appliance to be used in, upon or in connection with or to treat any condition of a human tooth, jaw or associated structure or tissue;
 - (b) confirming the function, contour and shade of a prosthetic or appliance, including by performing the necessary intra-oral procedures;
 - (c) performing any other services, roles, functions and activities included in the scope of practice of the designations and licensing categories set out in the bylaws.
- (3) The scope of practice of dental technology also includes health promotion, research, education, inter-professional collaboration, consultation, management, administration, advocacy, regulation or system development that is related to the activities and application of specialized and evidence-based dental technology knowledge, skills and judgment described in subsections (1) and (2).

Individuals working in dental laboratories and denturist clinics who are not engaging in the scope of practice outlined above do not need to apply for a DLT permit. This would include administrative staff (e.g., reception, shipping and receiving, or HR personnel), and other employees who are incidental to facilitating the delivery of dental technology services, but who do not participate in aspects of the scope of practice listed above (e.g., people who disinfect impressions, pour stone models or print 3D models, scan models but do not design dental prosthetics, maintain laboratory or clinic equipment, etc.)

As a registrant, you must still ensure that individuals working in dental laboratories adjacent to the scope of dental technology are properly trained and supported in their roles.

Supervision Requirements

DLTs must work under the supervision of a NSRDHDTD registrant.

Prior to supervising a DLT, the NSRDHDTD registrant must:

- Confirm the individual's permit status, including any conditions or restrictions they are subject to.
- Ensure they are covered under your registrant PLI policy (See NSRDDHDTD Requirements Policy.)

They must indicate on their application the name of the registrant they are supervised by. If the registrant they are supervised by changes, they must inform the regulator.

- A DLT and their registrant supervisor must be employed by the same business.
- A registrant must take responsibility for any tasks within the scope of dental technology that are delegated to a DLT.
- A registrant must only delegate and/or supervise those tasks which fall within their individual scope of practice and competencies.

Supervision is the consultation, guidance, and oversight by a **registrant** to a **DLT**. The required level of supervision—**direct, indirect, or general**—depends on a combination of the DLT's competence and the complexity of the dental laboratory procedure being performed. The registrant supervisor must determine the appropriate level of supervision, based on these factors.

This supervision framework ensures that DLTs operate within their individual scope of practice, and that the quality and safety of dental prosthetics and appliances that are designed, fabricated, modified, or repaired under supervision are maintained.

- **Direct supervision** means the registrant is physically present in the dental laboratory where the DLT is performing the services (e.g., in the same room) and is immediately available to provide consultation, guidance, or assistance.
- **Indirect supervision** means the registrant is present within the dental laboratory facility or practice premises but not necessarily in the same room. The registrant remains readily available to consult, guide, or assist the DLT as needed.
- **General supervision** means the registrant is responsible for providing consultation, guidance, and oversight for specific dental laboratory procedures but is not required to be physically present.