

April 2025

## Regulation of Physician Assistants

### Frequently Asked Questions

On June 3, 2021, the Ontario government passed Bill 283, *Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021*. This bill amended the *Medicine Act, 1991* to establish that, as of April 1, 2025, physician assistants (PAs) are regulated health professionals under the purview of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO). Amendments to several regulations under the *Medicine Act* also came into effect on April 1, 2025 with respect to the regulatory framework for PAs.

The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) has developed this Frequently Asked Questions document to assist hospitals in understanding how the regulations of PAs may impact them. This is a companion document to the following OHA backgrounders:

- [Backgrounder: Bill 283, Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021](#)
- [Backgrounder: Amendments to Regulations under the Medicine Act, 1991](#)

For more information, please visit the [CPSO's webpage on PAs](#).

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#### Will PA practice in a hospital change as a result of regulation?

The regulation of PAs is intended to maintain the status quo of how they currently practice. PAs will continue to be prohibited from performing controlled acts independently, but can perform controlled acts through delegation in accordance with the CPSO's [Delegation of Controlled Acts](#) policy.

#### Will PAs be credentialed professional staff in a hospital?

No. The *Public Hospitals Act* (PHA) and Regulation 965 (Hospital Management) create the legal framework for the credentialing of professional staff in a hospital. This legal framework is detailed with respect to physicians and enables a hospital to determine the rules for the credentialing of dentists, midwives, and nurses in the extended class.

PAs, however, have not been added to this framework. The PHA broadly defines “physician” as “a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario or another prescribed person”. No other persons are prescribed for the purpose of this definition and while PAs are now members of the CPSO, the *Medicine Act* provides that:

“a reference in any other Act or regulation to a physician, a legally qualified medical practitioner, a member of the College or any similar expression does not include a physician assistant unless the other Act or regulation specifically provides that it does.”

The PHA does not specifically provide that the definition of physician includes PAs and as such, the credentialing provisions of the PHA do not apply to PAs.

### **Will hospitals have to update their by-laws?**

Hospitals should review their Board-Appointed Professional Staff By-Law to ensure the language used doesn't inadvertently capture PAs. For example, the [OHA Prototype Board-Appointed Professional Staff By-Law](#) currently defines "physician" as "a medical practitioner in good standing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario." The term "medical practitioner" is not defined in the Prototype By-Law, *Medicine Act*, or *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*. As PAs are now members of the CPSO, a note has been added to the Prototype By-Law to indicate that if a hospital employs PAs, the definition of "physician" could be amended to explicitly exclude PAs. Hospitals using a similar definition of "physician" as the Prototype By-Law could consider amending their By-Law, for clarification purposes, as suggested in the Prototype By-Law's note.

### **Will hospitals have new reporting or other obligations with respect to PAs?**

Yes. As noted above, the *Medicine Act* provides that:

"a reference in any other Act or regulation to a physician, a legally qualified medical practitioner, a member of the College or any similar expression does not include a physician assistant unless the other Act or regulation specifically provides that it does."

However, the *Medicine Act* provides an exception to this rule with respect to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA). The RHPA requires hospitals to report to a regulated health professional's respective college in certain circumstances, such as when a hospital has reason to believe a regulated health professional is incompetent, incapacitated, or has sexually abused a patient, as well as when a regulated health professional is terminated or resigns due to professional misconduct, incompetence, or incapacity. These reporting requirements will also apply to PAs now that they are a regulated health profession.

Hospitals should also implement processes, likely similar to those used for other regulated health professionals, to ensure that PAs practicing in the hospital are registered with the CPSO. Additionally, hospitals should ensure that the title "physician assistant" or abbreviation "PA" are only used by individuals who are registered with the CPSO. Those not registered, including those awaiting certification, are prohibited from using the PA title.

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