

**CHIROPRACTORS REGISTRATION BOARD OF VICTORIA
STANDARDS OF PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

**GUIDELINES FOR PRACTITIONERS ON APPROPRIATE DUTIES
FOR SUPPORT STAFF**

September 2008

Description

This policy sets out the position of the Board and provides an interpretation of professional conduct issues relating to the employment of support staff. This policy is the standard against which a registered chiropractor will be evaluated in relation to the use of support staff/assistants in their practice.

What is Support staff?

Support staff or an assistant is a member of staff employed within a facility or private practice who assists the registered chiropractor in the efficient delivery of their services to their patients. For the purpose of this document, the term “assistant” will be used and “registered/ supervising/ treating chiropractor” will mean a “chiropractor” registered under the Act.

Context of this Policy

A chiropractor registered under the Act is responsible for professional conduct compliant with the legal and professional requirements of the State.

In this context, the registered chiropractor is always directly accountable for the scope of practice of the assistant and the care the patient receives and is vicariously liable for the conduct of the assistant. It is essential therefore, that Practitioners provide a copy of this policy to staff and ensure that they are familiar with its contents. Practitioners should be aware that to continue to work in a position where they are aware of a breach of the Board's Guidelines, may be considered to be unprofessional conduct.

Similarly, the Practitioner is responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety aspects of the office, and he/she should be fully aware of the requirements/recommendations of organisations such as Worksafe (see their publication: “Officewise” – website: www.workcover.vic.gov.au). The Board also recommends that the Practitioner and all office staff have first aid training to Certificate Level 2, and that the office complies with Worksafe's recommendations in regard to first aid in the workplace.

The extent to which the assistant can be involved in treatment is defined in this document.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Board's Code of Professional Conduct and legislation that impacts on *the employment of support staff*, which include:

1. *Health Professions Registration Act 2005*
2. The Health Records Act [insert full title], in particular, Privacy Principle 4.1
3. The Privacy Act. [Insert full title]

4. Board Policies on Clinical Practice [to insert full references for policies covering adequate data collection and follow-up]

Conditions that must be satisfied in case of *the employment of support staff*:

1. Responsibilities of the Registered Chiropractor

- a) The registered chiropractor as employer has an obligation to provide the environment in which the following role responsibilities can be fulfilled and has the responsibility to ensure that:
 - (i) The assistant is clearly and correctly identified as an assistant.
 - (ii) The assistant understands the scope and limits of their responsibilities.
 - (iii) The assistant is trained to be competent for the tasks required in that facility.
 - (iv) The assistant is provided with clear direction as to the work to be undertaken.
 - (v) There are clearly defined lines of communication and delegation.
 - (vi) The quality of the work of the assistant is regularly evaluated to ensure they are safe, effective, efficient and competent.
 - (vii)

At no time is an assistant to be requested or required to undertake a task which is outside their competence and cannot be delegated as defined in this policy.

- b) In particular, it is the responsibility of the registered chiropractor to ensure that the assistant must:
 - (i) Respect the rights and dignity of all individuals and be sensitive to their needs.
 - (ii) Maintain confidentiality of patient information.
 - (iii) Recognise the extent and limitations of their role responsibilities and only undertake activities that they are competent and delegated to perform.
 - (iv) Maintain high standards of personal behaviour and conduct.
 - (v) Display professionalism toward other health providers.
 - (vi)

2. Employment of Chiropractic Students

Where a registered chiropractor employs a chiropractic student as an assistant, it is the responsibility of the chiropractor to ensure that chiropractic students do not undertake employment where their developing knowledge as a student is being used to fulfil the requirements of a registered chiropractor.

3. Training of Assistants

Appropriate training for assistants should be encouraged to ensure an adequate knowledge base and minimum standards of practice. Such training should include:

- (i) Recognition of, and dealing with, adverse reactions/outcomes
- (ii) Emergency procedures
- (iii) Confidentiality
- (iv) Basic chiropractic terminology
- (v) Other recognised courses for assistants or equivalent study as determined by the
 - a. registered chiropractor

Additional competence-based training may be required to meet the specific requirements of a particular workplace.

A training log and written procedures should be made available to the assistant where applicable. A review of performance should be conducted annually.

4. Supervision of Assistants

The registered chiropractor is professionally responsible for the direction and supervision of all support staff under their control.

Supervision may be direct or indirect as identified by the registered chiropractor and may depend on:

- (i) Practice setting and type of service
- (ii) The nature of the task
- (iii) The acuity and/or stability of the patient's condition
- (iv) The complexity of the patient's needs
- (v) The level of competence of the assistant

The lines of responsibility must be clearly defined both in terms of employment, in relation to the supervising chiropractor and in keeping with roles as defined in the policy. The position description should include the procedure to be followed should the designated registered chiropractor not be present, which should include the requirement that no therapeutic procedure is to be commenced in the absence of the Practitioner.

A registered chiropractor in charge of a chiropractic facility is responsible to:

- Assume responsibility for or specifically designate a chiropractic supervisor to direct the work of support staff
- Provide documented instructions to support staff, which are regularly reviewed
- Provide ready access to a registered chiropractor on the premises.

5. Reporting Processes

Where the assistant may be undertaking activities away from the direct supervision of the registered chiropractor the job description should specify:

- a. the required methods, content and frequency of reporting
- b. the process for reporting emergency situations to the appropriate health care professional

6. Function of Assistants

a. Tasks/treatment techniques which must not be delegated to assistants

The assistant **must not** under any circumstances:

- (i) interpret referrals for chiropractic
- (ii) interpret diagnosis or prognosis
- (iii) interpret assessment findings
- (iv) undertake treatment procedures and goals of treatment
- (v) conduct formal history taking with patients (must not conduct the complete
 - i. history)
- (vi) undertake assessment procedures
- (vii) develop a physical diagnosis
- (viii) plan treatment programs
- (ix) institute or modify treatment programs
- (x) offer advice with respect to conditions for the management of chiropractic complaints.

The following activities must not be delegated to an assistant or any other person who is not a registered chiropractor or a student on supervised clinical practice, under any circumstances. Thus, an assistant must not apply:

- a) chiropractic examination
- b) electrotherapies
- c) motorised traction
- d) acupuncture (insertion or removal)
- e) orthopaedic examination
- f) neurological examination
- g) radiology/radiography
- h) provide chiropractic care or any treatment other than those specified in 6(b).

*This means that the registered chiropractor **must** conduct the following procedures and instructions and bear full responsibility for the use and application of any treatment:*

- (i) Assess the patient prior to each treatment.
- (ii) Determine the site, timing, and spread of treatment at the time of treatment.
- (iii) Undertake all warning and safety procedures, instruct the patient of
- (iv) contraindications and the expected reactions of the modality to be applied.
- (v) Reassess the patient at intervals that are deemed appropriate for the condition
- (vi) being treated.

b. Tasks/treatment techniques which may be delegated to assistants

The assistant may undertake receptionist, clerical and housekeeping duties according to the requirements of the service subject to the processes and procedures specified by the registered chiropractor. Such processes and procedures should be developed in accordance with acceptable standards of:

- a) patient safety
- b) quality assurance
- c) award conditions of employment
- d) occupational health, safety and welfare considerations

The assistant may supervise the safety of clients receiving this treatment techniques/modalities. The registered chiropractor must provide specific instructions for the assistant to act in an emergency while summoning assistance. In the event of the occurrence of pain, discomfort or unexpected changes the matter must be reported to the treating chiropractor immediately. The supervising chiropractor must remain on-site during such treatments and be available to respond immediately.

The assistant may undertake non-treatment activities as required by the service, such as:

- a) escorting patients
- b) reception of patients
- c) preparing patients for chiropractic and aiding dressing following
- d) treatment
- e) preparing and maintaining equipment required for treatment

The assistant may also assist the registered chiropractor:

- (i) to lift/move patients
- (ii) with group activities
- (iii) with certain techniques executed by the chiropractor, eg. Cranial manipulation etc.
- (iv) in generating and maintaining medical records with patient assessment, such as collection of demographic data

Under the **specific instruction** of a registered chiropractor the assistant may:

- supervise the practice of established exercise programs
- apply/remove weighted and/or mechanical traction provided that:
 - the assistant has completed appropriate training as determined by the manufacturer, technique given, and registered chiropractor, and keeps a training log;
 - the patient's condition is not acute

Following the appropriate patient assessment by the treating chiropractor, the assistant may prepare, apply and monitor, and remove the following treatments:

- (i) hydrocollator packs
- (ii) infra-red lamps
- (iii) ice/heat packs

Reference: *Policy for Registered Chiropractors and Osteopaths re: Assistants in Chiropractic or Osteopathy Practice.*
Chiropractic & Osteopathy Board of South Australia, 3 May 2006