

COLLEGE OF ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGISTS (CAP) COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COVID-19 FAQ

Q: Is CAP operating at this time?

CAP continues to operate with a skeleton staff working behind closed office doors. The remaining staff are working remotely and or attending the office on a rotational basis to reduce the risk for spreading the virus. CAP values the health and safety of all staff. All CAP activities are being performed, however, there may be some delays in responding and processing inquiries. We kindly ask all members to limit any direct office visits.

CAP has been, and will continue to, pivot to a paperless environment for both efficiency and environmental purposes. All paper based administrative processes are under review. For example, this is the last year that members will be able pay practice permit fees other than through the member portal on the CAP website. Paper submissions require multiple manual administrative steps. Ongoing efforts are being made to reduce and minimize the use of regular post mail.

All CAP committees such as the Credentials Evaluation Sub-Committee (CESC) and Registration Approvals Sub-Committee (RASC) will continue to function. However, efforts will be undertaken to minimize both the frequency and number of members physically present to allow for appropriate social distancing. Additional efforts to streamline the administrative functions of both committees and virtual meetings are also being explored.

The goal is to ensure that CAP's chief functions of credentials evaluation, registration, and professional conduct continue to operate as outlined in the *Health Professions Act*. CAP's public protection obligations are not comprised by the current pandemic. Neither are our obligations to ensure all of our decision-making processes meet the principles of natural justice including fairness, transparency, and objectivity.

Q: Am I able to take the Law and Ethics in Alberta Psychology (LEAP) and/or the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP) during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

You can register and take the LEAP examination as per usual. Unlike other Canadian jurisdictions that continue to employ an oral ethics and jurisprudence exam, this recent innovation by CAP allows provisional registrants to continue to make progress to full registration. This is an example of how CAP is attempting to leverage technology without sacrificing our public protection mandate.

The EPPP is administered by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) through Pearson VUE testing centres. These test centres are currently closed. Registered provisional psychologists can continue to complete their registration process

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through CAP. They should directly consult the Pearson VUE website for real time information on when they can schedule their examination. Please click [here](#) for the Pearson VUE website.

Q: As a registered provisional psychologist must I have the required face-to-face contact with my supervisor during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

To reduce the risk for the COVID-19 virus, CAP has temporarily relaxed the requirement for direct face-to-face contact between provisionals and supervisors. This can, for the duration of the pandemic, be accomplished by secure virtual supervision sessions. These sessions need to occur at the same duration and frequency as face-to-face contact. They should be documented as per the *Standards of Supervision* [Form A](#) and [Form B](#).

Q: Is CAP directing all psychologists to not see clients face-to-face?

Mental health services have rightly been designated as being essential by Alberta Health (click [here](#) for link to essential services). However, Alberta Health indicated that in their view, some specific mental health services may not be essential. These latter services may be performed if they are, however, urgent. CAP is seeking additional clarification from Alberta Health on these caveats.

Essential and urgent nonessential mental health services may be performed face-to-face provided that the risk management strategies recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health are followed. These can be found [here](#). These include pre-screening clients for symptoms and recent travel. They must be accompanied by appropriate sanitization and social distancing in both waiting rooms and office spaces.

CAP supports the designation of mental health services as essential. However, it is not essential that all services be delivered face-to-face. Psychologists are encouraged to transition all possible/appropriate psychological services to secure digital platforms. CAP also recognizes, however, that some psychologists work in settings such as emergency departments or with specific populations where face-to-face contact is essential. As a result, CAP is not issuing a specific directive outside of the [Public Health Order CMOH 07-2020](#) at this time and encouraging all psychologists to exercise prudent judgement and diligence in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Q: How do I conduct psychological testing without seeing clients face-to-face?

It is recognized that many psychologists have assessment-based practices. Some may determine that these services are neither essential nor urgent. Others may

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deem their services as essential and/or urgent. Still, others are employing risk management strategies and explaining these during their informed consent process.

Recent guidance on virtual assessment services has been provided from the American Psychological Association (APA). You can access this guidance information from the APA by clicking [here](#). These guidelines recognize that some standardized testing procedures may require modification and adjustment. Others may not be appropriate for virtual administration. Careful consideration must be given to battery selection and subtest substitution.

Sound clinical judgement is required to ensure the integrity of the assessment is maintained while employing virtual technology. This includes maintaining test security, interpretive integrity and ensuring both ethical and professional requirements including outlining any limitations in the assessment data collected are reported.

Q: How do I transition my practice to a secure virtual platform?

CAP does not recommend specific platforms. However, it is recommended that psychologists seek platforms that are PIPEDA or HIPPA compliant. Some platforms such as Zoom have multiple levels of security and the Health version is typically recommended by regulators. Other frequently recommended platforms include Doxy.me and thera-LINK.

Some psychologists are offering each client a selection of virtual platforms. This is appropriate provided the psychologist explains the level of risk associated with each platform. Psychologists are advised to take additional steps such as wearing a headset to protect confidentiality, ensuring their office setting and presentation appropriately represents the profession.

Psychologists are responsible for their platform selection, additional informed consent processes, and safeguards required when employing virtual technology. The following are some resources designed to assist psychologists in transitioning to virtual platforms:

- [CAP Practice Guideline: Telepsychology Services](#)
- [Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations: Model Standards for Telepsychology Service Delivery](#)
- [APA: Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology](#)
- [APA Article COVID-19 and Psychology Services: How to Protect Your Patients and Your Practice](#)
- [APA Article Comparing the Latest Telehealth Solutions](#)
- [APA Office and Technology Checklist for Telepsychological Services](#)
- [APA Informed Consent Checklist for Telepsychological Services](#)
- [APA Article Telephone Psychotherapy: Ensuring Patients Have Access to](#)

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Effective Care

- [College of Psychologists of British Columbia Telepsychology Services Checklist](#)

Q: Are there new rules regarding telehealth services to clients who are living outside of Alberta?

Several jurisdictions across Canada and the US have temporarily relaxed existing mandatory licensing across jurisdictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Canadian jurisdictions, the generic provision is for existing clients who have returned to their home jurisdictions because of educational institution or employment shutdowns. It is strongly recommended that psychologists check with each jurisdiction prior to providing services.

Many jurisdictions like Alberta have posted their rules for temporary telehealth practice in Alberta because of the COVID-19 crisis. Alberta's rules can be found by clicking [here](#). Psychologists who have clients that have returned to the US can consult the APA website. A recent posting has summarized new rules for many US jurisdictions.

Q: Do I have additional mandatory reporting obligations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. There are mandatory reporting obligations under the Public Health Act. Please click [here](#) to read Field Law's article on the duty to report. Psychologists must also adhere to the Chief Medical Officer of Health's recommendations for self isolation if they have engaged in recent international travel, are displaying symptoms, or have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. Failure to follow the Chief Medical Officer of Health's guidance when providing psychological services may constitute unprofessional conduct.

Q: Are there financial assistance programs if I have lost income and/or had to lay off my employees?

Yes. Both the national and provincial levels of government have announced financial assistance programs. These are changing in real time. Members are encouraged to seek professional accounting guidance to ensure that they are appropriately advised. The following are only a few of the resources available:

- [Government of Canada Supplemental Unemployment Benefit Program](#)
- [Government of Canada Work Sharing Program](#)

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- [BMS Insurance Coverage Position Statement](#)
- [BMS YouTube Video COVID-19 Telepsychology and Business Interruption Services](#)
- [Bennett Jones COVID-19 Resource Centre](#)

Q: My practice has been closed what do I do now?

If your practice has been closed self-care is particularly important. This is to ensure you are in the best position to resume your profession when current restrictions are lifted. CAP has previously posted self-care information in response to the pandemic. Self-care information from the APA can be accessed by clicking [here](#). Another option is to volunteer your services through the [Psychologists' Association of Alberta Disaster Response Network](#). This program is providing pro bono psychological services to first responders and frontline health care workers.

Q: Where do I get up to date valid COVID-19 information?

Experts are advising to access to legitimate evidence-based sources. This is because of the proliferation of COVID-19 myths. The following are recommended sources for real time, evidence-based information:

- [Alberta Health Information for Albertans](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Resources for Psychological Practice:

- [Canadian Psychological Association](#)
- [Psychologists' Association of Alberta Resource Library](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#) 