

Registry /Certification/Regulation/ Unions / Associations

There is often confusion with language related to professions within Canada. This document is meant to provide some background information on certification, regulation, associations, and unions.

Registry

A healthcare provider registry is a database of credentialed (“registered”) health workers who are eligible for employment in positions that require “registered” health care professionals. HealthCare providers typically submit an application to be added to the registry. The criteria for inclusion in the registry could require specific education standards (eg. graduate from an accredited program). Some registries include a process where employers can report a healthcare worker that was terminated for just cause (eg. abuse) and the individual may be suspended or removed from the registry. Registries may be managed by the government or a professional association. Inclusion within the registry may be free of charge or could require payment of a small annual fee. Verification of contact information on a regular basis allows registries to stay current and to provide an up to date listing of registered health care providers.

Certification

Certification is usually a formal procedure where a person is assessed to ensure they meet certain criteria related to attributes, education, characteristics in accordance with standards. The assessment process is typically more extensive than that associated with a healthcare registry. In Canada, a program may be certified by the provincial government if a program follows a government curriculum. For example, a Health Care Aide may be certified because they graduate from a program with a standardized curriculum. Many apprenticeship programs are government certified. On the other hand, a program may be certified because they meet the government standards, but the person who graduates may or may not be considered ‘certified’. Sometimes associations will offer certifications such as is the case in the fitness leadership industry. Sometimes individuals are certified if they successfully pass a certification exam. It is important to note that certification is NOT the same as regulation. Certification typically costs more than inclusion on a registry, but significantly less than regulation.

Regulation

Regulation is a government mandated process that is aimed to ‘protect the public’ from professionals who may harm the public through their activities. Regulation occurs through the development of regulatory bodies (known as Colleges) who oversee the profession. The focus of the Colleges is to ensure that individuals who are licensed to practice the profession are practicing safely and effectively without risk to the public. Regulated professions include many health professions (nursing, doctors, dentists, physiotherapist, occupational therapists, dental assistants etc.) and others such as engineers, lawyers and other non-health related careers. The Colleges set standards which include requirements for registration (education, training, hours of practicum, education program accreditation etc.), and have practice standards and bylaws which describe how the registrants must practice the profession. The

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public can file a complaint against a registrant if they do not follow the practice standards and bylaws. Colleges often also have requirements for registrants to demonstrate continuing competency. Becoming a regulated professional requires that the members pay annual fees and those fees pay to maintain the membership roster, administer the policies, investigate complaints, etc. Colleges typically also require a large volunteer pool of registrants and public representatives to participate in the required committees as set out by government regulations. There are more significant annual fees to cover the costs of managing the organization

For a list of Regulated professions and trades in Canada see this link.

<https://canadabusiness.ca/government/regulations/regulated-industries/regulated-professions-and-trades/>

Unregulated profession

An unregulated profession is one where those who practice are not required to have specific credentials, education, training, certification, or a license to practice. Both OTA practice and PTA practice in Canada are unregulated.

Accreditation

Educational institutions and/or individual education programs within an institution can be accredited. Accreditation is a process where institutions and/or programs are evaluated against a set of standards. In Canada, entry-to-practice occupational therapy programs and physiotherapy programs at the university Masters level can complete a process to seek and be granted accreditation. These programs are then considered to hold accreditation status. Graduating from an accredited OT or PT program is one of the requirements for Canadian OTs and PTs to be eligible to register with their respective regulatory college.

OTA/PTA education programs can choose to seek accreditation through the OTA & PTA Education Accreditation Program (EAP) in Canada. This accreditation process is voluntary; graduates of accredited programs may say that they graduated from an accredited program. Some associations (CAOT and CPA) provide a membership category for OTAs and PTAs who have graduated from accredited programs, and some employers require applicants to OTA and PTA positions to be graduates from accredited programs.

Association

Association is a group of like-minded individuals who join together to promote an idea or a cause. Professionals can form an association and other 'like-minded individuals' are invited to join. The group then can offer leadership and advocacy related to a specific area of practice or other political or practice issues or continuing education opportunities or group benefits (such as malpractice insurance or other group insurance). Association membership is usually voluntary and so not all practising professionals are necessarily members of their profession. It is important to recognize that some associations also serve a regulatory function in some provinces (Alberta PT College and Association).

Unions

Unions serve a function to protect a worker on the job. They do not serve to protect the public, but do serve to negotiate workplace functions (job descriptions, wages, workplace conditions etc). Unions may also provide continuing education activities for their members. Members of a union pay union dues.

Making it real

An individual may belong to more than one of the above.

Example 1: *An occupational or physiotherapist may belong to a provincial association and a national association; they are required to be a member of their regulatory college (by law in order to practice) and may be a member of a union at their workplace.*

Example 2: *An OTA/PTA may belong to one or more national associations, may have graduated from a certified (by the government) college program, may have a diploma from an accredited OTA PTA education program (by the EAP), and may be a member of a union. There is NO place in Canada where they would be members of regulated colleges. (In the province of Quebec, PRTs are regulated by the PT regulatory college, but their training is different than that of an OTA/PTA in the rest of Canada.)*

Example 3: *An employer requires that an OT or PT provide evidence of their membership with their regulatory college. Because OTA/PTAs are not regulated, that same employer may require that a graduate OTA/PTA come from an accredited program and/or have a membership with a specific organization/association. The association membership criteria and/or evidence of graduation from an accredited education program helps employers know that the employee meets some standard in the absence of regulation.*

References

- Canadian Labor Congress (2018) <http://canadianlabour.ca/why-unions>
- Government of Alberta <http://www.health.alberta.ca/professionals/health-care-aide-programs.html>
- Government of Canada <https://canadabusiness.ca/government/regulations/regulated-industries/regulated-professions-and-trades/>
- National Fitness Leadership Alliance (2018) <http://www.nflacanada.ca/get-certified-nfla/>
- Web Finance, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/certification.html>