



College of  
Dental  
Technologists  
of Alberta

## **Advice to the Profession**

# **Understanding the Difference Between Registered Dental Technologists and Registered Dental Technicians**

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This Advice to the Profession has been developed to provide Regulated Members with additional support, information, and guidance to assist you in your practice.

These documents may be edited or updated for clarity at any time, please review this Advice to the Profession regularly to ensure that you are aware or the most recent information.

*Advice to the Profession is not a standard of practice and should not be interpreted or used as legal advice.*

## Understanding the Difference Between Registered Dental Technologists and Registered Dental Technicians

In Alberta, the titles “Dental Technologist” and “Dental Technician” both refer to regulated health professionals who work in the profession of Dental Technology and are regulated members of the College of Dental Technologists of Alberta.

While there are similarities in these titles and overlap in their roles, there are important differences in terms of scope or practice.

Both dental technologists (RDTs) and dental technicians (DTs) are integral members of the oral healthcare team who work to create high-quality, customized dental prosthetics and appliances.

The expertise of dental technologists and dental technicians is crucial in shaping patient outcomes. By ensuring that dental restorations are not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and tailored to the unique needs of each patient, their contributions significantly enhance the quality of dental care provided.

### The Health Professions Act and Dental Technology Profession

Alberta’s *Health Professions Act* (the “Act”) defines the practice statements for each regulated health profession in Alberta. The practice statement for RDTs and DTs is defined in Schedule 6(3) as follows:

*In their practice, dental technologists do one or more of the following:*

*(a) fabricate, duplicate, alter and repair prosthetic and orthodontic devices,*

- (b) fit those devices when fitting is incidental to the fabrication, duplication, alteration or repair, (b.1) teach, manage and conduct research in the science, techniques and practice of dental technology, and*
- (c) provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations*

The Act also established protected titles and abbreviations that only a regulated member of the College of Dental Technologists, authorized by the regulation, may use. This includes:

- dental technologist;
- dental technician;
- registered dental technologist;
- registered dental technician;
- clinical dental technologist;
- clinical dental technician;
- CDT;
- D.T.;
- R.D.T.

## What is the difference between an RDT and a DT?

### **Scope of Practice**

#### *1) Registered Dental Technologists*

**Dental technologists, or RDTs,** have a broader scope of practice than dental technicians and can provide a wider range of services. They are authorized to provide services in all four (4) disciplines(areas) of dental technology defined in the *Dental Technologists Profession Regulation*.

Typically, dental technologists have completed a formal educational program that includes education in all four disciplines. They are assessed at entry-to-practice in all four disciplines (areas) of dental technology practice.

Because Registered Dental Technologists are trained, competent and authorized to provide services in all disciplines of dental technology, they

are often involved in more complex and specialized dental procedures that require skills, abilities, and authorization to provide services that include several areas of the dental technology profession.

## 2) *Registered Dental Technicians*

The *Dental Technologists Profession Regulation* categorizes the profession of dental technology into four distinct disciplines or areas of practice:

- 1) Removable full prostheses
- 2) Removable partial prostheses
- 3) Fixed partial prostheses
- 4) Fixed and removable orthodontic and periodontal appliances

**Registered Dental Technicians, or DTs**, have a more limited scope of practice than dental technologists (RDT). They are authorized to provide services in one (1), two (2), or three (3) competencies (areas) of dental technology. In general, dental technicians are authorized to provide services in only one (a) area of dental technology.

Dental technicians may have completed an educational program or the CDTA's practicum student program<sup>1</sup>. They are assessed at entry-to-practice in one (1), two (2), or three (3) competencies (areas) of dental technology.

Because Dental Technicians (DT) are **not** authorized to provide services in all areas of dental technology, *they are limited to providing services in the area or areas in which they are authorized by the CDTA*. This limitation may exclude dental technicians from providing more complex services that require authorization to provide services in several areas of the dental technology profession.

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 2023

**Dental Technicians who operate outside of their authorized area(s) of practice are guilty of an offence and are subject to disciplinary action under the *Health Professions Act*.**

Discipline under the Act may include:

- Practice Permit Suspension
- Practice Permit Cancellation
- Fines
- Payment of Costs

In addition, an employer who employs an RDT or DT to provide dental technology services or restricted activities in any area(s) or practice that the RDT or DT is not authorized to practice may be guilty of an offence and may be held liable for fines and/or other consequences defined in the Act.

No person shall knowingly employ a person who meets the requirements for mandatory registration in the Act to provide dental technology services or restricted activities unless that person is a regulated member or authorized to provide the services under another enactment.<sup>2</sup>

**If the employer is a regulated health professional, including a Dental Technologist, Dental Technician, Dentist, or Denturist, the employer may be subject to discipline under the Act.**

## **Labour Mobility**

### 1) *Registered Dental Technologists*

As of 2017, all provinces and territories have joined the federal government in signing the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* (CFTA). The CFTA, along with other applicable legislation, define the labour mobility provisions of

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<sup>2</sup> Health Professions RSA 2000 Section 47 Chapter H-7

domestic trade agreements and specifies Alberta's labour mobility obligations for the transfer of regulated professionals within Canada.

Labour mobility refers to a regulated professional's ability to qualify for a license in a regulated jurisdiction based on their current registration in another regulated province or territory. Dental technologists qualify for registration in **all** regulated Canadian jurisdictions based on their current registration with the CDTA.

## 2) *Registered Dental Technicians*

Under CFTA, in cases where licensure requirements or scope of practice are significantly different jurisdictionally, labour mobility legislation does not apply. This is the case in the profession of dental technology. Alberta is the only regulated jurisdiction whose legislation supports the registration of dental technicians. As a result, dental technicians do not qualify for registration in other regulated jurisdictions based on their registration with the College of Dental Technologists of Alberta. This limits the professional opportunities for dental technicians.

## Public Safety

Dental technologists and dental technicians are regulated under Alberta's Health Professions Act, ensuring they adhere to the same rigorous standards as other oral health professionals, such as dentists and denturists.

The College of Dental Technologists of Alberta (CDTA) is the regulatory body focused on public protection that sets standards for entry to practice for regulated professionals in the field of dental technology and ensures that registered dental technologists and registered dental technicians meet the CDTA's standards of practice, code of ethics, and continuing competence requirements.

Concerns regarding the professional conduct of Registered Dental Technologists (RDTs) and Dental Technicians (DTs) can be addressed

through the College's [complaints process](#). Additionally, the College mandates that RDTs and DTs maintain professional liability insurance, providing public protection in the event of a claim.

**Sourcing dental appliances, prostheses, and devices from a registered dental technologist (RDT) or dental technician (DT) ensures that patients receive safe, ethical, and competent oral health care.**

## Public Registry

Employers who hire individuals engaged in the practice of dental technology have a responsibility to verify the registration status of those individuals before employment. Employers can confirm the registration status and authorization(s) of a dental technologist or technician through the [College of Dental Technologists of Alberta's Public Register](#).

Dentists, Denturists, and other regulated health professionals who source dental appliances, prostheses and devices in Alberta can verify the registration status and authorization of a dental technologist or technician through the [College of Dental Technologists of Alberta's Public Register](#).

**This verification ensures that the dental technologist or dental technician is a regulated health professional.**