



## **Standard of Practice: Treatment of Vulnerable Populations and Complex Health-care Needs**

**Date:** January 1, 2024

**Amended:**

### **Client outcome**

The client receives care that is clinically indicated, safe, and effective and techniques are modified for each client's unique needs, views, preferences, and concerns.

### **Registered Massage Therapist outcome**

The Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) applies treatment techniques in a manner that is clinically indicated, safe, and effective. Clinical indications for massage therapy treatment are identified through intake, assessment, and regular communication with the client before, during, and after treatment.

### **Requirements**

The RMT must:

- Strive to understand the needs of vulnerable populations and complex health conditions they may be treating, for example: pediatrics, the elderly, clients with chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), persons in palliative care, etc. When there is any doubt in the RMT's ability to safely assess and/or treat certain populations, the RMT must refer the client to another qualified RMT or health care provider.

Please note: Under the Nova Scotia *Age of Majority Act*, a person ceases to be a minor when they reach the age of nineteen years. This age is recognized by some provincial legislation, while other provincial legislation provides for benefits and rights when an individual reaches a younger age. The *Personal Health Information Act (PHIA)* recognizes the common-law principle of “mature minors,” which recognizes that the capacity to consent is incremental and situational. The capacity of each individual minor must be considered in the context of each episode of care.

- Recognize when their personal scope of practice is not adequate to treat vulnerable populations or more complex health needs and refer the client to a colleague or other health-care professional who does have the required qualifications. Additional education and training are often needed for treating certain populations, for example: oncology massage clients.
- Provide space and opportunity for the client to bring a substitute decision-maker or caregiver. RMTs must recognize when a client may not be capable or needs assistance regarding informed consent and communication. Treatment must be postponed until the client can bring a substitute decision-maker with them or until capability has been established.
- Ensure that parents/caregivers are present with pediatric clients when appropriate and that consent is obtained.
- Ensure they are aware of any precautions/contraindications (also referred to as yellow or red flags) and that modifications to assessment, treatment, and/or home care are appropriate, safe, and effective.
- Be vigilant in understanding the complexities of medications and pathologies relevant to certain populations and remain up to date on this information.
- Understand and use current evidence in supporting the health care needs of vulnerable populations and complex conditions.
- Collaborate with other health practitioners in the client’s circle of care when indicated and with the client’s written consent. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal or written communication with any referring health care providers to ensure safe and effective treatment.

### **Relevant documents**

- *Age of Majority Act* (Nova Scotia)
- Dual Health Profession Policy
- Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice, Federation of Massage Therapy Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FOMTRAC)
- Standard of Practice: Client-centred Care
- Standard of Practice: Collaboration and Professional Relationships
- Standard of Practice: Communication
- Standard of Practice: Consent
- Standard of Practice: Treatment Techniques