

# RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS PROVIDING VIRTUAL CARE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE



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## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE

CRTO PUBLICATIONS CONTAIN PRACTICE PARAMETERS AND STANDARDS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY ALL ONTARIO RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS IN THE CARE OF THEIR PATIENTS/ CLIENTS AND IN THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION.

CRTO PUBLICATIONS ARE DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE LEADERS AND DESCRIBE CURRENT PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THESE CRTO PUBLICATIONS MAY BE USED BY THE CRTO OR OTHER BODIES IN DETERMINING WHETHER APPROPRIATE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED.

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If an employer's policies are more restrictive than the CRTO's expectations, the RT must abide by the employer's policies. Where an employer's policies are more permissive than the expectations of the CRTO, the RT must adhere to the expectations of the CRTO.

# DEFINITION

Virtual Care refers to the use of communications technology (e.g., videoconference, telephone, or email) to provide healthcare services (e.g., patient education) at a distance where the healthcare professional and the patient/client are not in the same physical location. It may also involve situations where the healthcare service is not being given by the healthcare professional and received by the patient/client at the same time (i.e., not in real-time). As a result, this constitutes a therapeutic RT-patient relationship, and all applicable legislation applies.

“By maximizing access to care and minimizing travel and wait times, virtual care makes health care delivery more human, efficient, and equitable.”

(Ontario Telemedicine Network, 2023)

## CERTO MEMBERS

CERTO Members who are engaged in virtual care, regardless of where the patient/client is physically located when the service is provided, are responsible for:

- adhering to all Ontario legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to all CERTO Members (e.g., standards of practice, scope of practice, controlled acts authorized to RTs, ethical guidelines, etc.);
- adhering to any specific terms, conditions, and limitations on their CERTO certificates of registration;
- determining whether providing their services via virtual technology is appropriate for the particular patient/client;
- obtaining informed consent from the patient/client, both for service provided and for the use of virtual care as a means of service provision;

## CRTO MEMBERS (CONT.)

- protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the patient’s/client’s personal health information by taking reasonable steps to confirm the information and communication technology and physical setting being used themselves and by the patient/client permits the sharing of the patient’s personal health information in a private and secure manner (for more information, the RT may contact the [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#);
- ensuring there is a plan in place for medical emergencies; and
- documenting all interactions in accordance with the CRTO’s [Documentation standards and guidelines](#).

### PLEASE NOTE...

All CRTO Members are required to maintain Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) coverage in accordance with the [CRTO Professional Liability policy](#). When engaged in virtual care, CRTO Members are responsible for ensuring that their own PLI policies offer adequate coverage for that type of service delivery.

## PROVIDING OUT OF PROVINCE CARE

In addition, when the virtual care practice involves a patient/client who is a resident of another jurisdiction, the CRTO Member is also responsible for:

- determining whether the jurisdiction permits its residents to receive virtual care services from healthcare providers who are not registered in that jurisdiction and, if they do, whether there are any restrictions placed upon their practice; and
- ensuring that the patient/client is aware that their service is being provided by a healthcare professional who is registered in another jurisdiction, and that if they have any complaint regarding the service, the patient/client should direct their concern to the CRTO.

**Patient care orders must come from a member of the appropriate Ontario regulatory body:**

An RT working in community care can provide virtual care to a patient in another province, provided that the ordering physician is from Ontario, and that province does not have additional restrictions which would not permit this.

Note: The RT is responsible for ensuring that they adhere to each province's legislative and regulatory requirements for which they provide virtual care.

## NON MEMBERS

RTs from other jurisdictions that provide virtual care services to Ontario residents are expected to adhere to the legislative and regulatory requirements that govern RT practice in Ontario.



**College of Respiratory  
Therapists of Ontario**

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**Ordre des thérapeutes  
respiratoires de l'Ontario**

This Professional Practice Guideline will be updated as new evidence emerges or as practice evolves. Comments on this guideline are welcome and should be addressed to:

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