

Psychotherapy Explanatory Note to Accompany Redline Document May 24, 2024

What is the purpose of this consultation?

The Ministry of Health is seeking public feedback on a proposal to designate “psychotherapy” as a health profession under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA). The “red line” document for consultation is a draft version of the *Health Professions Designation and Amalgamation Regulation* (HPDAR). The HPDAR is the regulation which sets out which health professions are designated under the HPA (such as physicians, nurses, and optometrists).

The purpose of the HPDAR redline document is to demonstrate what regulatory change would be needed to designate “psychotherapy” as a health profession.

What is “psychotherapy”?

Persons who are competent to perform psychotherapy treat mental disorders or other mental health-related problems resulting in a patient’s psychological suffering. Certain types of counsellors have the education and competency to perform psychotherapy and may include those who use titles such as clinical counsellor and counselling therapist.

Why is this consultation being held?

Feedback gathered during this consultation will be considered in the decision whether to designate “psychotherapy” as a regulated health profession under the HPA. Ultimately, the decision to designate a new health profession is made in regulations established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC) .

What is designation?

Designation is different from regulation. Under the HPA, a new health profession must first be “designated” before they can become regulated by a regulatory college. Regulatory colleges are given the authority under the HPA to oversee the practice of a designated health profession in the public interest, and are responsible for establishing, monitoring, and enforcing standards of practice for the profession(s) they oversee, setting registration requirements, and having a process in place for responding appropriately to complaints from the public about the conduct of individual practitioners.

If “psychotherapy” is designated as a health profession, persons who practice psychotherapy would become regulated by a regulatory college at a future date yet to be determined.

If psychotherapy is designated, what happens to people who work in that professional area?

The designation of psychotherapy itself would not have an immediate impact on persons currently practicing psychotherapy.

Some professionals who practice psychotherapy, such as psychologists, are already regulated health professionals overseen by a regulatory college. These professionals would not be impacted by the designation of psychotherapy as a profession.

Other practitioners who practice psychotherapy but who are not currently regulated by a regulatory college, which may include types of health-oriented counsellors and therapists, would become regulated by a college at a future date.

What happens if the proposed designation of “psychotherapy” happens?

Health professions are designated under the HPA. Once a new health profession is designated, profession-specific regulations are established, which establish the college that regulates the profession in addition to the profession’s scope of practice, reserved titles, and restricted activities (if any).

To regulate a profession, the regulatory college assigned oversight responsibility would establish specifics of regulation in bylaws, including education requirements, fees, continuing competence, and other licensing and public protection measures. If the LGIC approves the proposal to designate psychotherapy, details on further aspects of regulation would become available in the future. At present, there is no timeline for regulation.

Is a new regulatory college being created?

No. Designation of “psychotherapy” as a health profession would not result in immediate regulation of the health profession, and a new regulatory college would not be created.

What about other types of counselling and therapies?

The Ministry is currently seeking feedback on the designation of “psychotherapy” as a health profession. However, this consultation does not preclude or prevent future consideration of other types of counselling and therapeutic related practices. For the purpose of this consultation, the Ministry is seeking feedback only on the proposed designation of “psychotherapy”.

The public consultation period will run until June 24, 2024. Please submit your feedback by then.

How do I provide feedback?

Please send your input and feedback to the email address

PROREGadmin@gov.bc.ca.