



**Nova Scotia  
Board of Examiners  
in Psychology**

Suite 455, 5991 Spring Garden Road  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3H 1Y6  
www.nsbep.org

Telephone: (902) 423-2238  
Fax: (902) 423-0058

**BULLETIN FROM NSBEP  
CONCERNING THE EVOLVING CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)  
March 25, 2020**

To date, NSBEP has issued information from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

There have been four additional communications from NSBEP in the month of March. You can click on the links below to review the archives.

[March 12, 2020](#)

[March 19, 2020](#)

[March 20, 2020](#)

[March 23, 2020](#)

In today's communication, we wish to provide a further update concerning clients who have relocated outside of Nova Scotia during the COVID-19 crisis and information about the recent Order made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

**TELPEPSYCHOLOGY DURING COVID-19 IN OTHER CANADIAN JURISDICTIONS**

**ATLANTIC CANADA**

Under the MOU, psychologists in Atlantic Canada can provide telepsychological services to other Atlantic Provinces (i.e., NB, PE, NL) through a simple process of notifying the Board in the jurisdiction(s) - See the section related to the Memorandum of Understanding on the page:

<http://www.nsbep.org/information-for-registrants/telepsychology/>

In addition, PE has eased telepsychology requirements for psychologists from all jurisdictions:

During the time of the COVID-19 health crisis, psychologists registered in jurisdictions outside of Atlantic Canada (and who are not eligible for practice into PEI as part of the Atlantic Telepsychology MOU) who are continuing, or renewing, a professional relationship

with a client who has moved to PEI are eligible for a "Special Certificate" permitting telepsychology practice into PEI with that client. The "Special Certificate" will be granted upon simple notification to the PEIPRB Registrar with the psychologist's contact information and home jurisdiction registration number; no application form or fee is required.

## NEW BRUNSWICK

NB has adopted the approach mentioned below, that was developed by the College of Psychologists of Ontario.

## NEWFOUNDLAND

NL has also adopted the approach taken by the College of Psychologists of Ontario.

## QUEBEC

According to the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, there is no need for licensing for out of province psychologists who want to provide tele-psychology services for their « travelling clients » in their province.

## ONTARIO

The College has had several inquiries from licensed psychological service providers from other North American jurisdictions whose clients have temporarily relocated to Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, the clients may be experiencing considerable distress and are at increased risk because their psychological services have been interrupted.

As members know, the *Psychology Act, 1991* limits the provision of psychological services in Ontario to members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario. In the absence of legislative amendments, the College is not able to authorize anyone other than members of the College to provide telepsychology services to clients located in Ontario.

Under normal circumstances, the College views such activities by non-members as "unauthorized practice" and considers whether there is a need for appropriate action. The College has carefully considered the extreme circumstances in which we find ourselves. We recognize this must be taken into account with regard to duly registered/licensed practitioners from other jurisdictions who must provide telepsychology services into Ontario for their existing clients during the current emergency situation.

Therefore, in response to the urgent COVID-19 situation, the College will not initiate an "unauthorized practice" action against an out of province practitioner provided they:

1. Are registered/licensed in good standing in another jurisdiction at the time the services are provided;
2. Practice only within their areas of competence and in keeping with any terms, limits and conditions on their license/certificate of registration;
3. Provide the services to existing clients temporarily in Ontario due to the COVID-19 situation;

4. Determine it is clinically ill-advised to temporarily stop services and/or to transfer the service to a member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.

Out of province practitioners are asked to confirm their understanding and acceptance of the requirements listed above by notifying the College of their intention to provide telepsychology service to existing clients in Ontario. Practitioners should email the College ([cpo@cpo.on.ca](mailto:cpo@cpo.on.ca)) providing their name, the jurisdiction in which they are registered/licensed, and their registration/license number. While the College will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of this information, practitioners need not wait for confirmation before initiating service.

## MANITOBA

MN has adopted the same practice as Ontario.

## SASKATCHEWAN

SK is working on adopting this same process.

## ALBERTA

Similar to ON, AB has put in place measures to facilitate telepsychological services to clients who have relocated to AB.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC has adopted the same process as Ontario.

## OTHER JURISDICTIONS

No information at this time regarding NWT or Nunavut.

PLEASE NOTE THAT INFORMATION WAS CURRENT TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE ON MARCH 25, 2020. WE WILL PROVIDE ANY FURTHER UPDATES ON THIS MATTER AS WE BECOME AWARE OF THEM.

## CONTINUITY OF CARE

A recent Order was made under the Chief Medical Officer of Health which provides additional restrictions on healthcare professionals.

Here is a link to the full Order:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/COVID-19-Global-Order-2020-03-24.pdf>

Section 20(a) of the Order states that psychologists, and other healthcare providers classified in the same manner under the Order, who are providing services in private practice settings, may provide in-person services for cases that are urgent or emergencies. Service in other cases may be provided through virtual

care, which for psychologists is referred to as telepsychology. The Board's interpretation is that the Order is meant to protect all individuals and it restricts practitioners in private practice to provide in-person care only in urgent and emergency situations, where the practitioner believes that in-person service is required. In all other cases, to be in compliance with this Order, if services are to be maintained, they should be done so virtually.

Neither the Order nor the Board define what constitutes urgent or emergency cases, and such determinations would need to be made on a case-by-case basis using the psychologist's best clinical judgement. This process could be enhanced by completing peer consultation with experienced psychologists, including candidate registrants reviewing cases with their workplace supervisor and/or NSBEP supervisor, and utilizing the ethical decision-making process consistent with the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists.

As previously mentioned, the Board recognizes that psychologists would be concerned about continuity of care, and provision of services via telepsychology may be utilized in such cases.

The Board has established [Telepsychology Standards](#), which outline a number of considerations, including being competent to provide service in the medium used.

Not all psychologists have used video or other means of telepsychology (e.g., telephony services) before. However, it is important for all of us to have reasonable expectations at this time of crisis. Many well intentioned registrants have made suggestions to NSBEP about considering particular webinars, platforms, or resources. Thank you.

The NSBEP wishes to clarify that we are not expecting a psychologist obtain a particular certification in telepsychology. Rather, we would expect registrants to utilize the Board's standards of telepsychology in the spirit of supporting continuity of services at this time. Furthermore, we would encourage those interested in telepsychology to avail themselves of the resources available. NSBEP would offer the following considerations

- 1) There are number of resources and training available, many which are free, concerning the provision of services during COVID-19 utilizing telepsychology.
- 2) Consider offering services by telephone, if you simply do not feel that video would be workable at this time. While it is still important to refer to the Board's telepsychology standards in such a case, one might find this modality easier to put into operation.
- 3) Again, you may spend some time availing yourself of the resources and training resources available.

A number of free resources (not exhaustive) are listed below

### **Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB)**

The ASPPB has made available information and resources available. By visiting the link below, you can find additional information by scrolling down towards the bottom of the page that opens in your browser.

<https://www.asppb.net/page/covid19>

## Information from the Canadian Psychological Association

The Canadian Psychological Association ([www.cpa.ca](http://www.cpa.ca)) provided some information regarding COVID-19.

- **FACT SHEETS.** Thanks to Dr. Steven Taylor, we have prepared a new Psychology Works COVID-19 fact sheet, and created a page on our the CPA website for all important updates related to the virus - <https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/>. Many thanks as well to CPA's Health Psychology Section for their contributions. Both the fact sheet and web page continue to evolve as we receive new information. We suggest regularly checking in with our CPA website as it will continue to be updated as the situation evolves, and new information is shared.
- In addition to the fact sheet on coping with COVID-19, already posted at the link above, three more are in the works - one on working at home with children, the psychological impacts of COVID-19, and resources related to telepsychology. We hope to have these posted imminently at <https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/>.
- **BMS and Gowling WLG** have prepared an article on telepsychology practice which is posted at <https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/>.
- **APA.** The APA has shared some resources to ensure that psychologists have the tools and support that is needed. They have developed new guidance on [how to protect your patients and your practice](#) as well as an [office and technology checklist for telepsychological services](#).

**Note: Information provided in this publication is not to be construed as legal advice or to substitute for the psychologist's own awareness of the legislation and standards of practice. For legal advice, please speak to your own lawyer or contact the pro bono legal hotline of your professional liability insurer.**