

# Standards of Practice



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of Practice





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## 1. Introduction

A standard is a recognized measure of value or excellence. A Professional Standard of Practice (PSP), therefore, is the acceptable level at which one must carry out professional responsibilities and provides a benchmark below which performance is unacceptable. Activities must be carried out in a proficient manner that is consistent and current with recognized best practices.

Meeting a PSP necessitates habitual self improvement and dedication to continuously striving for excellence. It is also predicated on the expectation that Environmental Public Health Professionals (EHPs) will strive to develop and enhance professional competence, and attain at least the minimum level of knowledge and skills that can be expected.

Standards provide a framework of principles outlining expectations of knowledge, skills, and values. They inform EHPs of their accountabilities and tell the public what to expect of EHPs. Standards also convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides EHPs' daily practice.

Please note that a Standards of Practice specific glossary section is included in Appendix A and a list of references in Appendix B.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Professional Standards of Practice

The purpose of the standards includes:

- To inspire a shared vision for EHPs
- To identify the knowledge, skills, and values that are distinctive of EHPs
- To guide the professional judgment and actions of EHPs
- To promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be an EHP
- To become a legal reference for reasonable and prudent practice
- To outline, for the public, the expectations for practicing EHPs

### 1.2 Indicators

Indicators illustrate how each PSP is applied and provide specific criteria that are used, when applicable, to measure the performance of an individual EHP.

## 1.3 Responsibility for Upholding the Professional Standards of Practice

It is the responsibility of individual EPHPs to act professionally and to be accountable for their own practice. All EPHPs are responsible for understanding these standards and for applying them to their practice, regardless of their specific area or program of practice.

In addition, EPHPs have an obligation to meet these standards regardless of the policies of their employers or other organizations.

The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors' (CIPHI) Council of Professional Experience (CoPE) is responsible for providing a framework for assuring that the profession as a whole continues to meet the demands and expectations of the public. This is done in part by establishing and regularly reviewing the standards and implementing policies and procedures that enable and support continuous learning and development of EPHPs. Employers of EPHPs also have a role in understanding these standards and in supporting EPHPs to meet requirements.

Public health employers in Canada, including those in environmental public health, have clearly expressed their support for human resources and competency development. Over the last few years, these employers formed a federal/provincial/territorial joint task group which prepared a public health human resources framework. The framework was reviewed and approved for implementation by the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health in October 2005 and is professionally and politically supported across Canada today.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Guiding Principles

In order to serve the public to the best of their ability, EPHPs have an obligation to maintain currency in their field of expertise and to act with due diligence when undertaking their professional duties. In general, these obligations are based on a Code of Ethics (see red section of this document) and on a set of underlying Guiding Principles of ethical behaviour, professional practice, and ongoing learning. The principles include:

### 2.1 Commitment to the Public

EPHPs are dedicated in their care and commitment to the public. They treat clients equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual well-being.

### 2.2 Professional Knowledge

EPHPs strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research, and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

<sup>4</sup> For more information see <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-ppsp/pphw-eng.php>.

## 2.3 Professional Practice

EPHPs apply professional knowledge and experience to their practice. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources, and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individuals and communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue, and reflection.

## 2.4 Leadership in Communities

EPHPs promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe, and supportive communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate public health. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these communities.

## 2.5 Ongoing Professional Learning

Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration, and knowledge.

# 3. Standards of Practice

The standards for the field of environmental public health are consistent with the discipline specific competencies (green section of this document), the environmental public health practice areas (Appendix C), and the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) *Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada: Release 1.0*. (Appendix D).

## 3.1 Accountability Standard

EPHPs are accountable to the public and responsible for ensuring that their practice and conduct meet legislative requirements and the standards of the profession.

### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Ensuring practice is consistent with the standards
- Identifying themselves and explaining their role to clients
- Taking responsibility for their actions and professional conduct
- Ensuring their documentation is accurate, timely, complete, and in accordance with applicable standards, policies, practices, and legislation
- Functioning within recognized scope of practice and following current relevant legislation, standards, and policies
- Following and/or helping in the development of agency or department policies and evidence-informed standards

## 3.2 Continuing Competence Standard

EPHPs maintain and continually improve their competence by participating in employer initiated/required training and orientation programs, other programs mandated by the regulatory authority, and CIPHI's Continuing Professional Competencies (CPC) Program.

### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Meeting the requirements for continuing competence, including investing their own time, effort, and other resources to meet identified learning goals
- Complying with CoPE's reporting requirements for their work experience and ongoing learning and development

## 3.3 Ethical Standard

EPHPs understand, uphold, and promote the values and beliefs described in the Code of Ethics (as outlined in the red section of this guide). The Code of Ethics delineates what EPHPs must know about their ethical responsibilities, informs other health professionals and members of the public about the ethical commitments of EPHPs, and upholds the responsibilities of being a self-regulating profession.

### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Identifying ethical issues and communicating them to their employers, colleagues, and members of their teams
- Identifying personal values and ensuring they do not conflict with professional practice
- Creating environments that promote and support safe, effective, and ethical practice
- Reporting unskilled practice or professional misconduct to the appropriate person, agency, or professional body
- Assuming responsibility for ensuring that their relationships with clients, colleagues, and the public are professional
- Ensuring consistency and fairness in the enforcement of public health legislation and other acts, regulations, and local by-laws in accordance with acceptable standards
- Safeguarding client health information by maintaining confidentiality and acting in accordance with information retention and destruction policies and procedures that are consistent with the standard(s) and legislation.

### 3.4 Knowledge Standard

EPHPs possess thorough and current education and continuing learning knowledge relevant to their professional practice.

#### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Sharing knowledge with clients, the public, colleagues, students, and others
- Supporting decisions with an evidence-informed rationale
- Ensuring they have thorough knowledge of the legal authorities related to their scope of practice

### 3.5 Knowledge Application Standard

EPHPs continually improve the application of professional knowledge.

#### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Applying their knowledge in their area(s) of practice, including specialized knowledge and skills in accordance with all legislation and based on an evidence-informed rationale
- Analyzing and interpreting unusual needs of their clients
- Demonstrating critical thinking when collecting and interpreting data and when planning, implementing, and evaluating all aspects of their work

### 3.6 Leadership Standard

EPHPs demonstrate their leadership by providing, facilitating, and promoting the best possible service to the public.

#### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Role-modeling professional values, beliefs, and attributes
- Acting as a role model and mentor for developing EPHPs and students
- Participating in EPHP associations, committees, and interest groups
- Providing direction to, collaborating with, and sharing knowledge and expertise with novices, other public health disciplines, students, and health care providers
- Participating in community development

### 3.7. Relationships Standard

EPHPs establish and maintain respectful, collaborative, and professional relationships with colleagues, other health professionals, and employers. This includes relationships with groups such as local government. Professional relationships are based on trust and respect.

#### *Indicators*

EPHPs demonstrate the standard by:

- Demonstrating effective conflict resolution skills
- Using a wide range of communication skills to effectively establish and maintain collegial relationships
- Sharing knowledge with others to promote the best possible outcomes