Sexual abuse prevention: the rules for psychotherapists

Zero tolerance in CRPO's terms: what the law counts as sexual abuse, the clinical exception, five years after care ends, the mandatory penalties, reporting another professional, and CRPO's funding for therapy, with Standard 1.8.

Study aid, not legal advice. Last verified against the official sources linked below on 11 November 2026.

1 What the law counts (Code s. 1 (3))

1. **Sexual intercourse** or other forms of physical sexual relations between the member and the patient.
2. **Touching**, of a sexual nature, of the patient by the member.
3. **Behaviour or remarks** of a sexual nature by the member towards the patient.

2 The clinical exception (s. 1 (4))

- "Sexual nature" does not include touching, behaviour or remarks **of a clinical nature** appropriate to the service provided, such as discussing sexuality relevant to treatment.
- CRPO: any form of **disrobing** or sexual touching of clients is inappropriate, even where some touch may be part of therapy.

3 After care ends

- A person remains a patient for **five years from the date** they ceased to be one (O. Reg. 202/25, s. 1, under Code s. 1 (6)).
- CRPO: even beyond five years, a romantic or sexual relationship with a former client **may never be appropriate**; in most cases it is inappropriate, inadvisable and potentially damaging.

4 Standard 1.8

- **1.8.1** Refrain from verbal, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse of clients.
- **1.8.2** The same respect toward clients' representatives, family, partners and others close to them.
- **1.8.3** Do not unduly influence clients or those close to them, including personal life decisions, wills or powers of attorney.

5 Power and boundaries (1.8 commentary)

- Understand the **power dynamic**: clients may feel pressured to consent or give positive feedback, and dual relationships magnify it.
- Boundary violations can be a **precursor to abuse**; a crossing must be clinically indicated and consented to.
- Talk about boundaries **early**, and set policies such as after-hours contact.

6 Mandatory penalties (Code s. 51 (5))

- Any finding of sexual abuse: a **reprimand**, and a suspension unless the certificate is revoked.
- **Revocation** for the acts the Code lists, including intercourse, genital or oral contact, masturbation and certain sexual touching.
- CRPO: registration revoked for at least **five years** for those acts.

7 Reporting another professional (ss. 85.1, 85.3)

- Report if you have **reasonable grounds**, from your practice, to believe another regulated professional sexually abused a patient.
- In writing to that person's Registrar within **30 days**; **forthwith** if the abuse may continue or others may be abused.
- The patient is named only with their written **consent**.

8 Funding for therapy (Code s. 85.7; CRPO)

- A client who alleges sexual abuse by an RP, in a complaint or report, may apply for therapy and counselling funding: up to **about $20,000** over five years, after other sources such as insurance.
- A primary support person may get up to **$600**.
- They are **free to choose** a therapist or counsellor who is not a relative and has not been found guilty of sexual abuse.

Zero tolerance: no sexual contact with a client, or for five years after care ends; report others' abuse; refer clients to CRPO's funding.

Official sources: CRPO Standard 1.8, Undue Influence and Abuse and CRPO, Sexual Abuse in Therapy and RHPA, 1991, with the Code and O. Reg. 202/25 (Psychotherapy Act). Condensed from Professional Conduct and Mandatory Reporting and the Limits of Confidentiality. Independent study aid, not legal advice, not affiliated with CRPO or COMPASS.