

4.4 Safe, Sanitary, and Appropriate Environment

Purpose:

All physiotherapists must ensure that the physical space where clients are being assessed and/or treated (the environment) meet certain standards. The environment where the physiotherapist is providing care will vary depending on the clinical setting. The appropriateness of the environment is often determined by the context of the treatment (e.g. treating clients in a hotel room may be appropriate when working with a sporting team but not otherwise).

A high standard of professionalism by the physiotherapist is essential to ensure an appropriate environment.

Participating in activities that contribute to a safe and effective physiotherapy practice are also described in the Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada¹.

Policy:

All physiotherapists are responsible for the provision of a professional environment, free from hazards potentially harmful to clients. This environment should include appropriate visual, auditory, and physical provisions as required/requested.

Guidelines:

A physiotherapist demonstrates the practice direction by:

Safe:

1. An emergency action plan is in place. This means:
 - a. Emergency exits are clearly marked and unobstructed.
 - b. All walkways are clear from obstructions and hazards.
 - c. Emergency phone numbers are clearly posted.
 - d. Staff are trained in appropriate and current first aid and CPR.
 - e. An emergency evacuation plan is posted.
 - f. A First Aid Kit and/or Automated External Defibrillator (AED) device is placed in a public location and is properly stocked/ maintained.
 - g. Fire extinguishers are readily available and maintained annually.
2. The physical building is up to date regarding municipal building codes.
3. Clients are appropriately supervised at all times. This means call bells or another type of alarm system must be available for clients who are not under direct supervision.
4. Equipment is stored in a safe and accessible manner and away from public walkways or hallways.
5. Sharps (e.g. acupuncture needles) are disposed of appropriately².

6. Equipment service records are kept in accordance with Practice Direction 4.17 – Record Keeping

Sanitary:

7. The physical environment is kept tidy and regularly cleaned.
8. A sink in the treatment area is recommended
9. Sufficient linens including gowns, towels, sheets, and pillowcases are available to maintain a high standard of hygiene.
10. Guidelines on infection control/routine practices are maintained (for full guidelines please refer to Practice Direction 4.5 - Routine Practice).
11. Equipment is maintained on a regularly scheduled basis (e.g. cleaned regularly, in good repair, and calibrated as per the manufacturer's instructions).
NOTE: For full guidelines on adequate care of specific equipment please refer to Practice Directions 4.31 – Electrophysical Agents and 4.26 – Whirlpool Cleaning and Safety.

Appropriate:

12. A third party is available to be present for any client interaction as required or requested by the client, their parent/guardian or by the physiotherapist.
13. Adequate space is available for the reception and waiting area, for individual assessment and/or treatment, for group activities, such as exercise, for staff to complete documentation requirements, and for the storage of client records.
14. Privacy is provided for clients and staff when there is a need to change clothing before or after treatment.
15. Adequate visual and auditory privacy is provided for assessments and treatments as required or requested.
16. Whenever possible, a scent-free environment is provided for all clients and staff.
17. Gowns and sheets are available for adequate draping of the client.
18. All persons (clients, their family members, therapists and staff) in and around the environment are treated with respect.

References:

¹ National Program Advisory Group Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada (October, 2009)

4. Manager

Key Competency 4.3 – Participates in activities that contribute to safe and effective physiotherapy care

4.3.1 – Anticipates, recognizes and prevents hazards in the physical environment (e.g., infection prevention and control; hazardous waste; electrical safety; equipment)

4.3.2 – Delivers physiotherapy services in a safe physical environment for self, other team members and staff.

² See City of Winnipeg By-law 6001/92 on Bio-Medical Sharps Disposal

<http://www.winnipeg.ca/CLKDMIS/DocExt/ViewDoc.asp?DocumentTypeId=1&DocId=577>

Or contact your local Regional Health Authority