

Entry to Practice Examinations

Guidelines Regarding Testing Accommodation for Candidates with Disabilities

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COPR would like to acknowledge and thank the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board for sharing their *Guidelines Regarding Testing Accommodation for Candidates with Disabilities* and for granting COPR use of their content in developing these guidelines.

Introduction

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators/Organisation Canadienne des Régulateurs Paramédicaux (COPR) is to facilitate collective and collaborative action in current and future interests of pan Canadian Paramedic regulation and to develop a common approach to provincial and federal obligations that may impact regulator function. For more information about COPR visit the web site: www.copr.ca.

Candidates with disabilities are entitled under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and/or provincial Human Rights legislation to reasonable testing arrangements that provide for fair and valid assessment. COPR will provide testing accommodations while ensuring the integrity of the examination. For the testing accommodation to be valid, the examination must test the competencies; that is, the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and judgments required for the safe and effective practice of an entry level primary or advanced care paramedics, rather than the candidate's disability.

COPR supports reasonable and appropriate modifications to the COPR Entry to Practice Examination procedures in order to accommodate candidates with disabilities.

The accommodations provided should not place a candidate with disabilities at an advantage or disadvantage in undertaking the examination as compared to non-accommodated candidates.

The purpose of this document is to provide details on procedures required to apply for and access accommodations for the COPR Entry to Practice Examination. Candidates are encouraged to read the COPR Entry to Practice Examination Handbook for other requirement such as examination eligibility, accommodation request deadlines, registration processes and timelines for the examination.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Candidates with disabilities are individuals who:

- (a) Have temporary or permanent professionally diagnosed physical impairment, or persistent cognitive, psychological, sensory or learning impairment; and
- (b) Believe that they would be considered disadvantaged in relation to other candidates for testing purposes.

For the purpose of this guide, the term “persons with disabilities” is not limited to this definition. This guide also includes temporary conditions such as injuries, recuperation from surgery or specific requirements due to pregnancy or childbirth.

Lack of language proficiency in either English or French is not grounds for review of examination results or for any form of special accommodation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The candidate must meet all eligibility criteria in order to undertake the COPR Entry to Practice Examination.
2. Factors to be considered in determining whether the testing accommodation is appropriate will include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a) Whether the disability disadvantages the candidate in the standard test taking task;
 - b) Whether the accommodation alters the skills and abilities that are measured, and at the level at which they are assessed; and
 - c) Whether the accommodations provided give the candidate with a disability an unfair advantage over other candidates.
3. COPR will modify the examination procedures and/or method of delivery, as appropriate, to meet the needs of the disabled candidates, while protecting the integrity of the examination.
4. Candidates are informed in advance by printed media through the COPR Entry to Practice Examination Handbook that they can request appropriate testing accommodations.

COMMON CATEGORIES OF DISABILITIES AND TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

The following section provides accommodation considerations for a number of disabilities. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it provide the decisions that may be made regarding the appropriate accommodation for specific individuals. Each request for accommodation is reviewed on an individual basis.

Candidates with Learning Disabilities:

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC):

“Learning disabilities affect every person differently, and the disorder can range from mild to severe. Sometimes people have more than one learning disability. In addition, one third of people with learning disabilities also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which make it difficult for them to concentrate, stay focused or manage their attention to specific tasks” (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Website: www.ldac-acta.ca/learn-more).

Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Electronic reader (i.e. Kurzweil)
- Separate testing room
- Additional time

Candidates with Mobility Disabilities or Limited Physical Tolerance:

Individuals with mobility or agility disabilities may exhibit a wide variety of conditions and functional limitations. Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Use of adaptive technologies such as a recorder (person who will fill in the answers)
- Ensuring Testing Centre is accessible
- Separate testing room
- Additional time
- Additional breaks

Candidates with Visual Disabilities:

Problems related to vision loss differ from one individual to another. The Paramedic profession may be able to accommodate professionals with some visual impairment. Reasonable accommodations may include:

- Large print or screen monitor and/or screen magnification software
- Electronic reader (i.e. Kurzweil)
- Enhanced lighting
- Separate testing room
- Additional time

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Accessible Testing Centre:

COPR will endeavor to ensure all testing centres are accessible (ramps, railings, etc.) to meet the needs of candidates with limited mobility. If a specific testing centre is not accessible; an alternate site which is accessible will be provided.

Additional Break:

There is only one lavatory break allowed during the four hour COPR Entry to Practice Examination and the time on the clock continues during the break. Additional breaks can be approved to accommodate an individual's disability.

Additional Time:

The COPR Entry to Practice Examination is 4 hours in duration. The examination can be extended beyond four hours to accommodate disabilities.

Electronic Reader:

COPR will provide candidates whose disability impacts their ability to independently read electronic material to utilize an electronically recorded version of the examination, through text to speech software (usually Kurzweil software).

Separate Testing Room:

Separate Testing Rooms will be provided if required to accommodate an individual's disability or when an electronic reader is in use.

Recorder:

An individual (selected by COPR) may be used to fill in the answer as directed by the candidate. This accommodation would typically be used when an individual is temporarily unable to use their dominant hand to click the mouse on the electronic examination. The candidate will be asked to sign a declaration waiving the recorder and COPR from unintentional errors in recording the candidate's answers.

DOCUMENTATION OF DISABILITY

It is imperative that COPR protect the integrity of the testing process. In addition, COPR wants to ensure that bonafide testing accommodations are arranged for candidates who require them; therefore, COPR requires professional documentation that reflects the person's current mode of functioning.

"Generally, thorough assessments that have been conducted after the age of 18 are considered to be adequate. However, if a long period has elapsed since the report was produced, person may be asked to return to a specialist to see if a new assessment should be conducted. Alternatively, if the report indicates that the condition is not stable, an update may be required". (Public Service of Canada; Guide for Assessing Persons with Disabilities: *How to determine and implement assessment accommodations*. July 2007, page 45).

The candidate is required to bear the cost of providing documentation.

For those candidates who have an observable disability, (for example a fractured arm), there is no need for further documentation other than a note from a physician. For those candidates with a hidden disability (such as a learning disability), appropriate documentation detailing the need for accommodation is required.

Persons with learning disabilities are the first source of information about their functional limitations and the accommodations that are useful to them. However, due to the wide variation in types and severity of learning disabilities, persons who indicate they have a learning disability that requires accommodation will be required to provide professional documentation to clarify the nature and extent of the resulting functional limitations. Examples of professional documentation include, but are not limited to; psycho-educational assessments; intelligence scales; tests of achievement; tests of cognitive ability; memory scales, etc. Documentation should include where possible:

- A clear description of the nature and extent of the current functional limitations;
- An interpretative summary of standardized test results used during the assessment done by the professional;
- Any means by which the candidate compensates for his or her functional limitations; and
- A description of accommodation that the person is using, has used, or could benefit from.

(Taken from Public Service Commission of Canada: Guide for Assessing Persons with Disabilities *How to determine and implement assessment accommodations*, July 2007 pg. 45 and 46).

Candidates must submit limitation details of the specific disability. Unless the candidate has been recently disabled or diagnosed, the candidate should already have obtained documentation and similar accommodations with their educational institute or in a testing situation. Accommodations previously provided should be included. Documentation should be completed and signed by a professional (for example: medical specialist, registered psychologist, rehabilitation counselor, special educator) familiar with the candidate's disability and required accommodations.

Diagnostic information related to a candidate's disability is highly confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties other than COPR's subject matter expert when an independent recommendation is required. Documentation will be handled in accordance with relevant provincial privacy legislation.

COSTS

Approved Examination Accommodations are provided at no cost to candidates with disabilities; however, candidates are responsible for costs associated with obtaining documentation to support the request for special accommodation.

APPLYING TO COPR FOR EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATION

To request an examination accommodation, candidates must provide a written request along with required supporting documentation to their Provincial Regulator when registering for the examination. Requests for examination accommodation are forwarded to COPR Examination Managers and are considered on a case by case basis. COPR reserves the right to obtain a recommendation from an independent professional based on the documentation provided.

Except in unusual circumstances, such as a recent injury, requests for accommodation must be received by COPR 35 business days before the examination (see COPR Entry to Practice Examination Handbook).