

# Guidelines for Podiatrists working with Podiatric Assistants in podiatry practice

## Introduction

These guidelines have been developed by the Podiatrists Board of New Zealand to provide guidance to podiatry practitioners as to the use of assistants in podiatry practice in line with currently accepted practice standards.

Failure to comply with these guidelines may be a matter of professional misconduct.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the Board's "*Guidelines for Providers of Footcare Services who are not Registered Podiatrists*".

## Who needs to use these guidelines?

The guidelines apply to all podiatrists, podiatric surgeons and podiatric radiographic imagers, hereafter referred to as ('**podiatric practitioners**').

These guidelines address how podiatric practitioners may work with podiatric assistants in podiatry practice.

## Summary of guidelines

The guidelines specify the requirements for podiatric practitioners delegating treatment of 'low risk' patients or clients to a podiatric assistant. They emphasise the importance of quality and safety of care and service.

Podiatric Assistants must comply with the HDC Code of Patient's Rights.

The [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights](#) grants a number of rights to all consumers of health and disability services in New Zealand, and places corresponding obligations on providers of those services. The Code extends to any person or organisation providing, or holding themselves out as providing, a health service to the public or to a section of the public. Practitioners must comply with the Code and the Board's standards of [competence](#) and [conduct](#).

The Board requires that podiatric assistants provide evidence of rigorous training and clearly defined responsibilities.

## Requirements for working with podiatric assistants

The precise nature of the duties of a podiatric assistant will vary depending on size and location of the practice and the training and experience of the podiatric assistant. The supervising podiatrist is always accountable directly for the scope of practice of the assistant, the care provided to the patient or client by the assistant, and for the conduct of the assistant.

The supervising podiatrist must ensure that:

1. The person who is to receive care has been assessed and determined to be 'low risk' by a registered practising podiatrist;
2. A referring podiatrist has provided a clearly written referral for the assistant and/or a care plan that includes the delegation of tasks for the assistant, including the expected outcomes and targets;
3. The person receiving care has provided informed consent for all procedures provided by the assistant;
4. The podiatric assistant:
  - Has the knowledge, qualification and skills to effectively and safely carry out the delegated tasks;
  - Documents all care provided;
  - Understands the role of the supervising podiatrist;
  - Has timely access to the supervising podiatrist;
  - Maintains confidentiality of patient or client information;
  - Complies with all relevant legislation
5. The patient or client receiving care from a podiatry assistant is reassessed by the podiatrist every 12 months, or earlier if there is a change in foot health status identified by the assistant.
6. Supervision involves the podiatrist being physically available to observe and direct the work of the podiatric assistant as required. It is the podiatrist's responsibility to ensure adequate levels of supervision are available whenever needed, which will be influenced by the competence of the podiatric assistant in the delegated tasks, patient circumstances and the setting and practice context. The risks associated with a patient's condition and certain tasks, and the complexity of tasks must be considered.
7. Each workplace should have appropriate evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the delivery of safe and quality services.

Podiatrists who intend to work with podiatric assistants and who have not undertaken supervision training should include supervision-related training in their continuous professional development activities.

## Qualifications for podiatry assistants

It is required that podiatric assistants provide evidence of rigorous training and clearly defined responsibilities.

The tasks and duties that the podiatrist can delegate to the podiatric assistant are dependent on their range of competencies.

## Definitions

In these guidelines a **podiatric assistant** is a member of staff employed within a facility or practice who is not a registered practising podiatrist and who assists a podiatrist in the delivery of services to his or her patients or clients.

A **low risk** patient or client, in this context, is defined as a person who may have systemic disease however it is managed and stable and there are no systemic complications involving the foot or lower limb.

<b>Date of issue:</b> June 2017
<b>Date of review:</b> This guideline will be reviewed every three years
<b>Last reviewed:</b>

## Attachment A

NZQA qualification: Allied Health Assistant

[http://search.nzqa.govt.nz/search?q=allied+health&btnG=Search&site=default\\_collection&client=nzqa&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&proxystylesheet=nzqa&oe=utf8&ie=utf8&filter=0](http://search.nzqa.govt.nz/search?q=allied+health&btnG=Search&site=default_collection&client=nzqa&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=nzqa&oe=utf8&ie=utf8&filter=0)