



## *Practice Facility Guide: Interruptions in Service at a Practice or Facility*

April 2026

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### **Preamble**

Maintenance of the accreditation standards of a practice is key in ensuring the safety of the public, patients and staff. The Designated Registrant (DR) is responsible for ensuring the standards are maintained<sup>1</sup>; this occurs on an ongoing basis with the day-to-day activity of an accredited practice.

However, there are times where circumstances arise that make it not possible for the DR and staff to offer the services for which the practice is accredited. Examples could include:

- Evacuations of a facility due to natural disaster, fire, or other issues that trigger an emergency lack of access or use of the practice space for an unknown period of time.
- Sudden loss of the DR of a practice with no immediate replacement, meaning the practice should not be offering veterinary services.<sup>2</sup>
- Inadequate staffing to allow accredited veterinary services to be offered safely.

The Practice Facility Accreditation Committee (PFAC) recognizes that in circumstances such as these, the best interest of the public may in fact be better served by temporary closure of the practice, pending resolution of the situation. During that time, it may not be possible to maintain accreditation standards, or the terms and conditions of accreditation.

Additionally, there may be times when a practice is not offering services due to a planned closure, such as during the relocation of a fixed facility, or a major renovation or repairs.

Permanent closure of a practice ends the accreditation of a practice. When unforeseen circumstances arise or a planned temporary closure occurs, the PFAC considers this an interruption in services. If measures have been implemented to ensure safety and security of patients, public and staff, the PFAC sees it as being in the public interest to facilitate resumption of veterinary services once the accreditation standards, terms and conditions are met.

This resource is published to assist DR's and staff during both planned and unplanned interruptions in service, where it is reasonable to expect the practice to offer services again in a timely manner.

For the purposes of this guide, "temporary closure" refers to interruption of offering the veterinary services for which a practice is accredited, either in part or in whole, not necessarily a complete lack of access to the practice.

## Guide

As per Section 3.6(9)(e), the DR of a practice should notify the CVBC of a temporary closure of a practice or a substantial change in the scope of practice<sup>1</sup>. In the absence of a DR, the owner or their representative should contact the CVBC to notify if there is no immediate replacement, pursuant to Part 4, Section 200.

With temporary closure or major interruptions in service, the following considerations should be addressed:

1. **Safety of Patients**: if there are animals remaining in the building with a loss of access by staff, contacting the BCSPCA and/or local law enforcement should be a priority to gain access when safe to do so.
2. **Security of Controlled Drugs**: ensuring controlled drugs are secure in an appropriate location (double locked), with no access by the general public, including tradespeople. Full audits of the controlled drugs should be done before and after a relocation. If access to the controlled drugs was lost, an audit should be done as soon as possible when access is regained. If the drugs are not accessible by staff, reporting this to Health Canada and local law enforcement should be considered. If the controlled drugs are accessible, the routine audits should occur.
3. **Security of other prescription products**: ensuring non-controlled prescription drugs are secure and not accessible by the general public or tradespeople.
4. **Consideration of oxygen sources, other flammable materials, biohazards (including radiation emitting devices)**: ensuring, if possible, that these materials have been made safe or notifying the appropriate first responders of their presence.
5. **Security of medical records and continuity of care**: prioritizing access to information for clients who may need to seek care elsewhere, or use of telemedicine or mobile services to continue care if a fixed practice is not accessible.<sup>A</sup>
6. **Advertising/Marketing activities to ensure the public is aware of the status of the practice**: this can include, but is not limited to, use of phone messages, website updates and social media posts.

The need to temporarily close a facility because of planned renovations or facility relocations should be anticipated in advance, and PFAC expects that the above considerations will be addressed before the relocation/renovation occurs. DRs should be prepared for unexpected delays in completion of work or city inspections.

Once access is regained, or a new DR is in place, a review of the standards relative to the scope of practice to ensure they are met should be done by the DR and staff. The DR should update the CVBC when they have regained access and confirm the accreditation standards, terms and conditions are met.

If the practice relocated, or underwent significant renovations or repairs, the PFAC may direct an inspection to ensure the accreditation standards are met. An inspection may be directed if there is concern the interruption in services is causing public risk, with PFAC able to limit or cancel accreditation if deemed necessary.

The PFAC strongly recommends practices develop an emergency plan addressing the above, thus providing a framework for the next steps when unforeseen events occur.

## **A. Continuity of Care during Temporary Interruptions of Services**

1. Registrants must ensure that clients and the public are appropriately notified of the temporary interruption of veterinary services and provide instructions for how to contact the practice to access medical records, and what to do if veterinary care is required (see CVBC Bylaws, s. 214-215). If the closure is anticipated (known relocation or renovations), efforts should be made in advance to ensure that clients can acquire sufficient refills of patient medications before the facility closure occurs.
2. Registrants must ensure that clients and other veterinarians are able to receive medical records in a timely manner. If the facility is likely to be closed for more than a month, the CVBC will publish where the records are accessible on its website.
3. Telemedicine – the CVBC’s Telemedicine guidelines require that telemedicine must be provided in association with an accredited practice facility. In instances of a short-term (less than 2 weeks) closure it may be reasonable that a veterinarian consult with clients through telemedicine under the auspices of the practice accreditation, so long as clients are properly advised that in-person care is not an option presently and the veterinarian determines that the individual circumstances are appropriate for telemedicine care. Whenever possible, medications should be prescribed through a pharmacy. If the medication requires dispensing from a veterinary facility, arrangements should be made to securely deliver the medication to the client without them attending on-site at an unaccredited/temporarily closed location.

### **<sup>1.</sup> Designated registrant’s duties**

*3.6 In addition to any other duty set out in the bylaws, the designated registrant has the following responsibilities:*

*(5) to ensure the practice or facility and any equipment, supplies, records or documents comply with Schedule D accreditation standards;*

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*(9) to promptly inform the registrar, who will convey to the committee any of the following respecting a practice or facility:*

*(a) a substantial change in scope of practice,*

*(b) a significant or material renovation,*

*(c) a change of mailing address or location,*

*(d) a change in the designated registrant,*

*(e) a closure,*

*(f) a loss of a significant amount of a controlled drug or a loss of records, and*

*(g) a change in ownership.*

### **<sup>2.</sup> General requirements**

*3.4 Every practice facility must:*

*(1) have a designated registrant pursuant to Part 4;*

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