Introduction

Recency of Practice refers to the period of time over which an individual has used their professional knowledge and skills, and the extent to which they have maintained their contemporary practice and competencies within a profession.

Where a certified practitioner cannot demonstrate recency of practice in line with the Policy, they must meet Resumption of Practice requirements to update their knowledge and skills and demonstrate their competence to practice in order to become recertified.

Definition of Practice

For the purposes of regulation, the NASRHP definition of practice has been adopted, as follows:

“[Practice]...indicates that an individual is drawing on their relevant professional skills and knowledge in the course of their work to contribute to safe and effective delivery of services within the profession... It is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care and may also include working in a direct nonclinical relationship with clients; working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, for example. This work can be of a paid or formal volunteer nature on a full or part-time basis.”

Recency of Practice Minimum Requirement

FHGSA certified practitioners must be able to demonstrate at least 1000 hours of practice over the previous five years in order to be considered as practising and maintain REGISTERED status with the HGSA. This is equivalent to one year of practice at 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) or at least 0.2 FTE per year over five years. Ongoing supervision is also a requirement of practice, and certified practitioners must be able to demonstrate a minimum of one hour per month of genetic counselling supervision while in active clinical practice (as defined in HGSA Policy 10 – Practitioner Certification for Genetic Counsellors).

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1 NASRHP; Self Regulating Health Profession Peak Bodies Membership Standards; 2/12/2016
MHGSA practitioners actively pursuing certification under the Certification Committee, or participating in a Resumption of Practice program administered by the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee may be granted PROVISIONAL registration status. These practitioners require additional supervision to practise, and need to have an acceptable plan and time-frame to meet the criteria for full certification. Practitioners with PROVISIONAL status must be able to demonstrate employment equivalent to at least 0.4 FTE (at least 400 hours within 12 months) to be considered as practising. Practitioners with PROVISIONAL status must be able to demonstrate a minimum of one hour per fortnight of genetic counselling supervision (as defined in the Certification Policy) while in active clinical practice. Additional or more frequent supervision may be required at the discretion of the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee as part of a Resumption of Practice program.

Supervision is a component of active clinical practice, and genetic counsellors who are on leave from clinical practice for 4 weeks or longer are exempt from supervision requirements for that time period. In the event of an audit, genetic counsellors who have been exempt from supervision requirements must evidence that they recommenced supervision immediately upon returning to active clinical practice (see Evidence of Practice below).

Maintenance of continuing professional development (CPD) does not constitute practice and is addressed separately in HGSA Policy 06 – Continuing Professional Development for Genetic Counsellors.

Evidence of Practice

On request, practitioners must be able to provide evidence to validate claims of ‘practice’.

Clinical genetic counsellors must be able to provide:

- Written evidence of employment such as a record of employment or employment contract. Alternatively, if written evidence is not available one of the Referees’ reports (below) can include details of hours worked.
- Referee’s report, including hours of work and clinical hours, hours of attendance at supervision, and evidence that the candidate practises within HGSA Policy 02 – Code of Ethics for Genetic Counsellors at the level of certified practitioner, can be given by the following referees:
  - The most appropriate Referee’s report is from a line manager or head of department who has at least two years post-FHGSA (Genetic Counselling) certification and whose registration is current.
  - Alternatively, if the line manager or head of department does not hold current FHGSA certification, two referee’s reports should be provided, one from the line manager or head of department AND an additional report from an appropriate senior genetic counsellor colleague with at least two years post FHGSA certification whose registration is current. To avoid conflict of interest the referee should not in any way report to or be managed by the applicant and the report should state the nature of their professional relationship.
  - In the absence of an appropriate referee with current genetic counselling certification, the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee may consider (on a case-by-case basis) at least two referee’s reports, at least one from a supervising medical geneticist AND at least one from a genetic counselling supervisor meeting the genetic counselling supervisor’s requirements as per the Practitioner Certification for Genetic Counsellors Policy. A current CV will be required for any referee who is not FHGSA in order to assess their suitability.
Individuals working in other areas of genetic counselling practice must be able to provide:

- Written evidence of employment such as a record of employment or employment contract. Alternatively, if written evidence is not available one of the Referees’ reports (below) can include details of hours worked.
- A formal job description from their employer
- A statement highlighting how practice in their current employment meets the Competency Standards on a regular basis.
- In the absence of a senior colleague who is a certified genetic counsellor or certified medical geneticist, the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee may consider (on a case-by-case basis) referees’ reports made by a suitably qualified medical specialist AND a suitably qualified counselling supervisor meeting the supervisor’s requirements as per the Practitioner Certification for Genetic Counsellors Policy. A current CV will be required for any Referee who is not FHGSA in order to assess their suitability as a referee.

**Mandatory Declaration**

Certified practitioners must complete a mandatory declaration at the time of annual registration, including that they have met the recency of practice requirements of at least 1000 hours of practice over the previous five years. Practitioners must maintain evidence of practice meeting the above requirements. An audit of at least five per cent of applications will be conducted by the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee on an annual basis to ensure compliance with the Policy and address any situations where certified practitioners cannot demonstrate the required minimum hours to be considered practicing. Selection for audit is not random, and the criteria for audit are at the discretion of the Committee. All practitioners with PROVISIONAL status will be audited on an annual basis.

**Resumption of Practice Time-frames**

Board Eligible MHGSA genetic counsellors undertaking certification are managed by the Certification Committee. They are required to notify the Certification Committee of changes to their employment that may impact on the eligibility requirements for undertaking genetic counselling certification, and are not eligible to undertake a Resumption of Practice program.

FHGSA certified practitioners who do not submit mandatory declarations and/or who do not meet the recency of practice minimum requirement will no longer be considered certified practitioners and their registration status will be changed to LAPSED. Genetic counsellors with LAPSED status are no longer entitled to use a protected title or act as a supervisor for the purposes of genetic counselling training, certification, or resumption of practice. The maximum time-frame allowed for being LAPSED (not being certified) is three years. Within these three years, FHGSA certified practitioners can apply to undertake Resumption of Practice (see below).

If an application to undertake Resumption of Practice is not made within those three years, the practitioner will become UNCERTIFIED. Their name will be removed from the register of genetic counsellors on the website. In order to recertify, these practitioners will need to re-apply to the Certification Committee for Board Eligible status to undertake certification.

**Resumption of Practice Requirements**

Where recency of practice requirements are not met, the practitioner must submit an application and a resumption of practice plan to the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee. Resumption of practice
applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and will account for previous area/s of practice, the type of practice they are returning to, and the length of time they have been away from genetic counselling.

A resumption of practice plan will include:

- evidence of a minimum of 0.4 FTE genetic counselling employment/practice as defined above.
- a proposed CPD program, including:
  - a log of any CPD activities undertaken since last registration, as described in the [CPD Policy]
  - a detailed outline of proposed CPD activity during the first 12 months of returning to practice. The proposed CPD activity must meet or exceed the annual requirements outlined in the [CPD Policy], and should include both knowledge and skill-based activities directly related to the area of practice that the candidate is returning to. Additional CPD activity may be required to meet the [Competency Standards] and may be requested at the discretion of the [Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee].
  - a summary of how this plan will assist to re-establish their skill and knowledge base in line with the [Competency Standards], with a particular focus on the first three months of return to practice.
- Supervised mentoring of practice from commencement of employment. Applicants must:
  - nominate a genetic counselling supervisor who is at least two years post-FHGSA and holds current registration
  - submit annual supervisors’ reports (as per the [Practitioner Certification Policy])
  - undertake a minimum of one hour per fortnight of genetic counselling supervision until recertification is achieved (additional or more frequent supervision or supervisors’ reports may be required at the discretion of the [Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee]).

A practitioner undertaking an approved Resumption of Practice program will be granted PROVISIONAL status on the register of genetic counsellors on the HSGA website. They will be subject to annual mandatory declarations and annual audit of their Recency of Practice by the [Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee]. They will also be subject to annual audit of their Continuing Professional Development activity by the Continuing Professional Development Committee.

**Supervisor Requirements**

The supervisor(s) for a Resumption of Practice program must be a genetic counsellor who has been FHGSA certified for at least two years and holds current registration. The mentor/supervisor role and reporting requirements for resumption of practice should follow the same guidelines as set out in the [Practitioner Certification for Genetic Counsellors Policy].

**Registration**

Full registration may only occur once all requirements are complete and a CPD log and supervisors’ reports (and any other requirements of the Resumption of Practice plan) have been submitted to and approved by the [Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee].

If the practitioner’s registration has LAPSED and they do not commence a Resumption of Practice plan within three years, they will become UNCERTIFIED. Their name will be removed from the register of genetic counsellors.
counsellors on the website. In order to re-register, these practitioners will need to re-apply to the Certification Committee for Board Eligible status to undertake certification.