

Starting Your Supervision Process to Become a Registered Psychologist in Alberta



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INTRODUCTION

We hope that this document will support new registered provisional psychologists in their journey of searching for a supervisor, a site, and key considerations to help with this process.

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PRE-CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE CHOOSING A SITE OR SUPERVISOR

Are you looking to become a registered provisional psychologist in Alberta? Maybe you're feeling overwhelmed with the process of finding a supervisor and a site that is a good match for you?

The process can be daunting, and it is a big investment, so we present considerations to help you make the best decision for your learning and growth.

- What are the **reasons** that becoming a psychologist is important to you?
 - Is it about helping people? Finding meaning in a rewarding career? Having a flexible work schedule? Enjoying a high earning career?
 - Are there other disciplines where you can meet these same needs and dreams? For example, registered as a Canadian Certified Counsellor?
- Registering as a provisional psychologist is a **big investment**, so it helps to know what to expect. Many spend about \$20,000 to \$30,000 throughout the process, including fees for supervision, fees to the College of Alberta Psychologists (CAP), and for Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) prep material. You can also expect to spend at least 300 hours studying for exams including the Law and Ethics for Alberta Psychologists (LEAP) and EPPP exams. Some registered provisional psychologists may choose to get additional training to make them more desirable as candidates, which can add to upfront costs. Areas may include how to write notes, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and how to do risk assessments.

- Are you hoping to become trained as a treatment psychologist or an assessment psychologist? You need a supervisor to formally train you in these disciplines, so it's important to decide early on whether you want to train in providing interventions and/or assessments.



Deciding Who You are as a Therapist and Setting Your Goals

While you don't have to have it all figured out before you start, it helps to have an idea of the direction of your provisional journey. This can help you select a supervisor or placement site. Key considerations include:

- What are your learning goals?
- Are you looking for supervision for clinical/counseling interventions?
- Are you also considering supervision for another practice area (e.g., assessment)?
- What theoretical orientations do you align with? Are there others you are looking to learn?
 - Be prepared to develop a couple of grounding theories to help inform your work, where you can best understand which interventions to intentionally use and why.
 - It's okay to change your primary therapeutic model as you grow as a psychologist, but anchor yourself to a model to start, so you understand how to help your patients make positive changes. Avoid becoming a psychologist who uses interventions without a solid footing in a therapeutic model.
- What patient populations are you interested in working with?
 - Some placements may specialize in specific populations, while others may be broader and allow you to work with a variety of people and ages.



- Consider a few areas of specialty, who you love to work with and why, and who you don't prefer to work with. It is helpful for networking and marketing to clarify your work.

Recognize that your theoretical orientations and patient population interests may grow and change throughout your 1,600 hours and your career.

ARRANGING SUPERVISION

Finding a supervisor can feel like a daunting process. There are many considerations such as match, supervision contracts, cost, internal vs. external supervision, and site.

Finding a Match

It is helpful to set up a meeting with potential supervisors to determine fit. Some important questions to consider are:

- What theoretical orientations are they trained in? Consider how this aligns with your goals.
- Ask about supervisor credentials.
 - What supervision training have they taken?
 - What ongoing support for supervision do they receive?
 - What supervision models do they work from? Supervisors use different supervision models; you can learn more about them [here](#).
- What is their supervision style? How do they teach?
- Do they have previous supervision experience?
- How many supervisees do they have on their caseload? Ensure that the supervisor has the capacity to offer you the amount of time you'll need.
- What are their expectations for supervision?
 - Will the focus be solely on my clinical work?



- Will we focus on developing the “person of the therapist?”
- What boundaries are there for emotional support in supervision?
- What support do you provide for preparing for the EPPP and LEAP?
- How does it differ from graduate school supervision?
- What is their availability for supervision, and how do you schedule it? Some supervisors have limited availability. Some book a regular supervision time each week; others may invite you to book in their online booking calendar.

Just like in counselling, finding a good fit with your supervision is essential. Notice if you have a sense of whether their personality fits with yours.

Supervision Contracts

CAP recommends that supervisors and supervisees have a contract that outlines requirements of the supervision process. Ask to see a copy of the supervision contract before making any commitments. A supervision contract may be different from a contractor contract. While these overlap, be aware what type of contract you’re reading. A supervision contract can include:

- The theoretical models your supervision will train you in.
- The amount of time the supervisor will spend with you.
- The methods of supervision (direct, live, video review, file audit, group supervision, etc).
- The supervision fee schedule, and the fees associated for each of the above supervision method; when fees are due and whether payment arrangements are possible.
- The duration of the supervision.
- How conflict between you and the supervisor will be managed.
- Reasons why the supervisory relationship may end.
- How remediation plans will be handled if needed.
- Whether you are required to provide additional service as a registered psychologist with the agency after supervision is complete. Some practices include internal supervision free as part of their model.



In addition to a supervision contract, you may have a contract for being hired as an employee or a contractor. This may include additional items such as if the agency has non-competes,

requires additional hours paid back for free supervision once registered, or requires payment of supervision provided if you leave before the contract is completed.

Take your time to reflect and ensure the best fit for you. Sometimes registered provisional psychologists have a sense of urgency or feel desperate, and don't find the best match, which impacts their learning and can lead to feelings of resentment.

Be thorough in reviewing contracts before signing them.

Supervision Costs

Different models exist, and supervisors vary on what they charge for supervision. There is no standard fee recommended by the College or Psychologists' Association of Alberta at this time. Some considerations include:

- If you have an internal supervisor, will there be a fee split arrangement with supervision included?
- How many supervision hours will the supervisor bill you for and at what rate? Are there any hidden costs?
- It may be worthwhile to calculate the cost of different scenarios for supervision. For example, if you have a 50/50 fee split with supervision included, you may find that it is the same cost (or more) than paying out of pocket for supervision with a higher patient fee split.
- Consider all aspects of fees. While supervision may seem costly, this includes hands-on training, supervisor liability for your work, and possibly advertising, office resources, and other fees that you may not be familiar with in running a private practice.

Internal Versus External Supervision

You may find a site that has supervision included, or you may decide to have an external supervisor. There are benefits and drawbacks to both.

- Internal supervision:

- **Benefits:** Having an on-site supervisor means your supervisor is likely to be familiar with site policies and procedures, to be available for urgent questions and to easily oversee your work. It's easier to achieve CAP's requirement for on-site hours.
- **Risks:** Internal supervision presents the risk of overlapping relationships, since working internally may mean your supervisor is also your administrative boss. Some registered provisional psychologists share they are not comfortable disclosing challenges they face as they are worried it may impact their hours, employment or referrals they receive. Some placements may offer different strategies to address overlapping relationships, so it's helpful to ask if they have a process in place. For example, some practices may designate a person to act as a mediator or include terms within the contract to separate administrative versus supervisory roles and responsibilities.

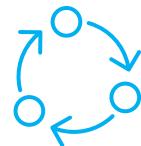
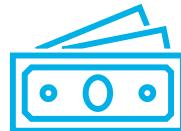
- External supervision:
 - **Benefits:** You have more flexibility in choosing a supervisor who is a good fit. Your supervisor may be more neutral and "on your side" without the risk of overlapping roles in relation to the site and supervision processes.
 - **Risks:** Meeting CAP's on-site requirement may be more challenging. Your supervisor may not be familiar with the policies or procedures or may prefer a different process. You may have to navigate connections between your on-site boss and your supervisor in case of process concerns. You'll need to know how to contact your supervisor and a clear plan for emergency supervision such as on-site support at the practice in case your supervisor is not immediately available. Some external supervisors may have sites that they do not supervise for, so be mindful of the challenge of matching an external supervisor to a specific site.
- Secondary Supervisor
 - You can add one or more secondary supervisors. They can be internal or external supervisors, and they can complement your work with a primary supervisor including providing supervision for a different area of practice, population, or theoretical orientation.
 - It is highly recommended that you speak to your primary supervisor about any secondary supervisors you add to your plan. A primary supervisor must communicate with your secondaries for CAP's midterm and final evaluations.



Choosing a Site

Whether you have an internal or external supervisor, find a site that is a good fit for you. You have a right to ask questions. As much as they are interviewing you, you are also interviewing them to find the right fit, and it may help to speak to several clinic owners to get an idea of the different structures. Here are some important considerations:

- What is the compensation structure? Do they offer a flat fee for patients seen, a fee split?
 - Compensation varies. Common fee splits are 60/40 or 70/30 (for the psychologist). Some practices offer 50/50 fee split with supervision included. Some offer 50/50 fee split with the expectation to also pay for supervision and rent. Ask what the practice provides for the fee split. It might be patient referrals, marketing, administrative support, billing, office space. Also ask what costs are your responsibility.
- Would you be hired as a contractor (self-employed) or as an employee?
 - [Here](#) is a helpful article from the CRA with some definitions. At some sites, registered provisional psychologists are contractors with strict rules about scheduling and types of patients they see. Some share they feel taken advantage of in such scenarios, so know your rights.
- How does the practice align with your values and ethics?
 - Sometimes there is tension between making money for the practice and patient care.
 - Who else works at the practice? Have they been long-term employees or contractors, or does the practice appear to have a high turnover of supervisees who leave after they become registered psychologists?
 - Will registered psychologists or professionals be working on site when you are there? Or will you be working more independently? CAP requires that registered provisional psychologists always be working with other registered professionals onsite, so that you have support if an urgent matter arises.
 - Are there any ethical considerations to consider about the practice? Sometimes looking at their consent forms or website, for example, can provide you with some information.
 - How does the practice manage conflict?



- Did you notice any “red flags?” Do you think these would be manageable for you?
- What types of patients does the practice work with? Do they see patients from the community? Are there contacts with third parties such as insurance companies, or the Workers’ Compensation Board, or do you handle Motor Vehicle Accidents?
- Ask about caseload expectations. Does the contract have minimum requirements regarding the number of patients you are expected to see each week? What is a healthy number of patients to see each day for you? Many psychologists find that seeing five to six patients a day is manageable and gives them space for administrative tasks and self-care.
- What is the site’s responsibility in providing patients for you? Is there an expectation for self-promotion? Do you have to pay for your own advertising?
- If your supervisor is off-site, is someone available on-site to consult on a time-sensitive issue?
- **Read your contract carefully.** Are you required to stay at the site for a certain period of time after getting registered? Does the contract have a non-compete clause? Are you required to repay supervision fees if you end the contract early?



WHAT TO CONSIDER DURING SUPERVISION

- Read your supervision contract clearly to make sure you are keeping up with expectations. Does the supervisor require you to share a certain number of video recordings of sessions? Or that you maintain a particular ratio of supervision?
- What are the expectations for how you will track and document your hours for each practice area?
- Keep your hour log consistent, as you will be required to review this frequently with your supervisor.
- You might have more supervision at the start of your supervision hours while still meeting the required 1 hour to every 15 hours of work, and you may have less stringent hours towards the end. This depends on your supervisors’ preferences and your training needs. Some supervisees benefit from more support at the beginning of their process.



It’s okay to change your mind. Your provisional process is a foundational time of learning, and you deserve a good fit.

- Keep your supervisor in the loop with changes to employment, scheduling or supervision plan, ensuring they are comfortable to continue providing supervision. When you get close to the end of your hours and exams, be in touch with your supervisor about expectations for completing registration.
- Continue to practice self-care. It is hard to help others if you are not helping yourself.
- The following books may be helpful as you are starting out:
 - Letters to a Young Therapist by Mary Pipher
 - The Gift of Therapy by Irvin D. Yalom
 - On Being A Therapist by Jeffrey Kottler

Many registered provisional psychologists make changes to their supervision plan throughout their 1,600 hours. Sometimes this means changing sites, changing supervisors, or adding or changing areas of practice. Be sure to be aware of requirements with CAP regarding this.

While you can change your primary supervisor due to a poor fit, this requires a submission to CAP's Registration Approvals Sub-Committee (RASC) and waiting for their meeting deadlines.

Considerations as You Work Towards Completion of 1600 hours

- Pay attention to the types of patients you love working with, and the ones you do not.
- By the end of your provisional hours, you'll want to consider your niche as a psychologist in order to eventually have a specialization.

IN CLOSING

We hope this guide was helpful in providing meaningful reflections and questions as you start your journey as a registered provisional psychologist in Alberta, and that it sets you up to grow in confidence and competence as a registered psychologist.