



College of Dietitians of Ontario  
Ordre des diététistes de l'Ontario

# 2026 CDO Orientation Module



## Introduction

Welcome to the College of Dietitians of Ontario (CDO) Board and Committee Orientation Module. Applicants must complete this module and assessment to be eligible to serve on the Board or a committee.

This module serves to provide applicants with a greater understanding of:

- The College of Dietitians.
- Our board and committees.
- Our role in the healthcare system.

At the end of this module:

- A link to an assessment is provided to test your understanding.
- After passing, you'll receive a code to enter in Section 1 of your application.
- You can retake it as many times as needed and must pass to be eligible.

Thank you for your interest in serving and hope that you enjoy learning more about CDO governance.



## Section I: An Overview of CDO Governance

### What is the College of Dietitians of Ontario?

The College of Dietitians of Ontario (CDO) is a regulatory body that regulates dietitians, with a duty is to serve and protect the public interest.

### What is Self-Regulation?

CDO is self-regulated, meaning the government delegates regulatory authority over the profession to the professionals who practise it.

Unlike professional associations, which are voluntary and focus on advancing the interests of their members, professional regulators exist to protect the public and have the authority to license and discipline registrants.

A key part of self-regulation is being accountable to the public, which means operating in an open and transparent way. A regulator:

- Is accountable to the public and the government.
- Protects the public interest by regulating its registrants.
- Requires individuals to be registered to practice the profession.
- Has a mandatory quality assurance program.
- Has a mandatory complaints and discipline process.

To keep the public informed, the Ministry of Health has asked all health regulatory colleges to provide an annual report. This report uses the [College Performance Measurement Framework](#) (CPMF), which helps colleges show how well they are acting in and protecting the public interest.



## What is Right Touch Regulation?

Right-touch regulation is a way of making decisions that balances needs and uses only as much regulatory effort as necessary. It means risk of harm being controlled to an optimum level of assurance and no further. This avoids either too little control of risks – which would increase the exposure to the risk of harm – or excessive control – which could waste resources, create false assurance and restrict innovation and growth. We consider it best practice.

There are eight key elements to right touch regulation:

1. Identify the problem before the solution.
2. Quantify and qualify the risks.
3. Get as close to the problem as possible.
4. Focus on the outcome.
5. Use regulation only when necessary.
6. Keep it simple.
7. Check for unintended consequences.
8. Review and respond to change.

## Legislation, Regulations and Bylaws

CDO is one of 26 health regulatory colleges in Ontario, together regulating 31 health professions. All of these colleges are governed by the [Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991](#) (RHPA), which gives them the authority to regulate their profession and states their duty to serve and protect the public interest. The Health Professions Procedural Code, part of the RHPA, provides rules and processes that guide the colleges in protecting the public.

Each profession has its own statute – a law that governs that profession. For CDO, this is the [Dietetics Act, 1991](#). Regulations under the RHPA and the Dietetics Act are legally binding rules.

CDO also has two bylaws, which are adopted rules and procedures that govern how the College operates:

1. [Bylaw 1: General](#).
2. [Bylaw 2: Fees](#).



## How CDO Protects the Public

Here's how we achieve our public protection mandate:

- We set entry to practice requirements so that only qualified individuals can work as dietitians in Ontario.
- We set standards of practice to ensure safe, ethical and competent dietetic services.
- We monitor dietitians through our quality assurance program to ensure their knowledge and skills stay up to date.
- We maintain a public register on our website where anyone can verify the status of registered dietitians (RDs) in Ontario.
- We investigate complaints about dietitians and take disciplinary and/or remedial measures when appropriate.
- We protect the dietitian title by allowing only CDO-registered individuals to use "Dietitian," "Registered Dietitian," or the French equivalents, or present themselves as a dietitian.



## Section II: The Role of the Board

Governance is the system of structures, policies, processes, and controls that guide an organization's decisions and use of resources. Good governance requires Board directors to:

- Understand their roles;
- Manage differences constructively;
- Effectively communicate; and
- Take responsibility for their actions.

The principles of good governance are:

- *Legitimacy and voice.* Everyone can share their input on issues raised during a meeting.
- *Direction and purpose.* A common vision and strategic framework.
- *Effective performance.* Achieving meaningful results in quality and outcomes.
- *Accountability and transparency.* Open processes and procedures that promote responsibility for outcomes.
- *Fairness and ethical behaviour.* Respecting differences and maintaining high standards of processes and performance.

### The Differences between Board and Management

The Board sets the strategic and policy direction for the College and makes decisions to protect and promote the public interest. Management implements the Board's direction and oversees CDO's daily operations, under the leadership of the Registrar & Executive Director.

The Board focuses on the "why" and "when," while staff, led by the Registrar, handle the "how." Together, the Board and staff work in partnership to regulate dietetics in the public interest.

#### How the Board leads strategy:

- Sets the mission, vision, values and strategic direction.
- Hires and evaluates the Registrar & Executive Director.
- Provides financial oversight and adequate financial resources.
- Monitors risk.
- Approves laws, bylaws, standards, and guidelines.



### How Management leads operations:

- Manages operations.
- Implements the Boards decisions and strategic goals.
- Provides information and support to the Board.
- Builds external relationships.
- Ensures compliance with legislation, regulations, bylaws, and other obligations.
- Recommends and implements the budget.
- Manages risk.
- Administers regulatory activities (e.g., registration and quality assurance)
- Provides administrative support to committees.
- Conducts policy work and provides subject matter expertise.
- Maintains the public register.

## Duties of the Board

The Board is composed of dietitians who are elected by registrants (elected directors), and members of the public who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (public directors).

The Board's duties include:

- **Establishing CDOs strategic direction** by setting and monitoring the strategic plan, balancing risks, opportunities, public interest, and resources.
- **Monitoring operational risk** by ensuring that risks are being appropriately managed, mitigated or controlled.
- **Providing financial oversight** by making key decisions about how funds are earned, spent, saved, invested, borrowed and protected. The Board sets the budget and allocates resources for College operations, programs, projects and initiatives.
- **Maintaining good governance** by following best practices in decision-making, policies, and processes, and following the Board's code of conduct.
- **Governing the profession** by setting RD standards of practice and guidelines, how they engage with the College.
- **Upholding integrity** by complying with laws, regulations, and bylaws, and maintaining systems that ensure responsible use of CDO resources and accurate reporting.
- **Monitoring performance** of CDO and the Registrar.



## What is the Key to an Effective Board?

Characteristics of an effective Board:

- Clear roles, structures and processes.
- Aims for consensus in decision making.
- Acts professionally and respectfully.
- Comes well prepared to make meetings productive and efficient.
- Supports the Board-staff partnership.
- Focuses on results rather than activities.
- Responds promptly to CDO communications.
- Works as a team, valuing praise, acknowledgment, and appreciation.

## Section III: The Board Code of Conduct

The Board is committed to upholding the highest standards of public trust and integrity in governing the College. The Board Code of Conduct helps maintain these standards and applies to all Board and committee members.

The principles in this code are based on CDO approved professional and ethical values, which help protect the public and ensure registrants are properly regulated.

### **Fiduciary duties**

Board directors have a fiduciary duty act honestly, in good faith, and in the best interests of the College. Personal interests, or the interests of other dietitians or groups, must not influence decision-making.

### **Acting in the public interest**

Board directors must act in the public interest when making decisions, ensuring objectives, outcomes and the resulting processes serve and protect the public.

### **Equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging**

The College is committed to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDI-B) as an essential part of protecting the public and ensuring safety. The Board promotes a culturally safe environment that fosters belonging within the College, the profession, and for the public. Board members are expected to approach all College work and decisions with an EDI-B lens and participate in EDI-B training with an open mind.

### **Respectful conduct**

Board directors are expected to acknowledge and value the diversity and contributions of all members. Board discussions and debates are expected to occur in a respectful, civil atmosphere, free from discrimination and bias. Board directors must not engage any conduct or communication that could be perceived as verbal, physical or sexual abuse or harassment.

### **Board solidarity**

The Board speaks with one voice. All Board directors are expected to support decisions, even if they abstained or voted against them.

### **Conflict of interest**

Board directors must avoid situations where their personal or financial interests conflict with their duties to the College.



### **Confidentiality**

Board directors respect the confidentiality of information gained through their College duties.

### **College spokesperson and media contact**

A Board director must not speak on behalf of the College unless they are authorized by the Board, or the Chair and Registrar.

### **Social media use**

All social media use must be consistent with the Code of Conduct. Board directors should avoid commenting or responding to posts in a way that might appear as speaking on behalf of the College or Board.

### **Commitment**

Board directors must commit the time to prepare for and attend meetings and actively participate in constructive discussions.

### **Compliance with Board and College bylaws and policies**

All Board directors must comply with the College's bylaws, policies and processes, as well as applicable provisions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, the Dietetics Act and other statutory requirements.

### **External Advice and Counsel**

A Board director must have Board approval to retain external advice or counsel with respect to College or Board business. A Board director who wants to retain external opinions or advice should make a request to the Chair.



## Section IV: The Role of a Board Director

### The Benefits of Serving

Serving in a governance role at CDO can be an opportunity to:

- Network.
- Develop leadership skills.
- Protect the public by ensuring safe, ethical and competent dietetic services in Ontario.
- Develop new and enhance existing competencies.
- Receive fair compensation for meaningful work.

### Responsibilities

Board directors are expected to:

- Serve on the Board and 2-3 committees.
- Review materials before meetings.
- Attend meetings.
- Learn and follow board and committee legislation, terms of reference, regulations, bylaws, and policies.
- Understand CDO's regulatory framework and current issues.
- Raise issues in a respectful way and encourage open discussion.
- Exercise judgment by raising concerns, taking an independent stand or sharing alternative ideas.
- Be aware of health system issues relevant to the role and share emerging issues.
- Support board decisions.
- Recognize conflicts of interest and withdraw from board and committee work as appropriate.
- Participate in CDO orientation and training sessions.
- Engage in all governance evaluation activities.



The role does not include:

- Advocating for the profession.
- Making decisions that benefit the profession over the public interest.
- Overseeing operational activities.

Board directors and committee members must always act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the public.

## Competencies and Attributes

The Board functions best when it collectively possesses a range of competencies and attributes necessary to make evidence-based decisions in the public interest. To support this, board applicants are screened using the [Competency and Attribute Framework](#). Individual directors are not expected to have every competency and attribute, but collectively, the Board should possess them all.

## Terms of Office

Dietitians are elected to the Board for a three-year term. Following the three-year term, Board directors can choose to run for re-election. Board directors can serve for six consecutive years on the Board or as a committee appointee, or any combination of the two roles.

If, after serving six consecutive years, an individual wants to continue to participate in CDO work, they are required to wait three-years before running in another election or applying as a committee appointee.

Public appointees serve terms as approved by the Lieutenant Governor.



## Commitment

Sitting on the CDO's Board is a rewarding experience but also comes with a significant amount of accountability and requires a strong commitment.

- The Board meets at least four times a year.
- Meeting materials:
  - Are provided to the Board approximately two weeks before the meeting.
  - Are made publicly available one week before the meeting.
- Board directors are expected to review all materials in advance and active participate in meetings
- All new Board and committee members must attend mandatory orientation before participating in any CDO work.
- The Board undergoes regular training, which sometimes occurs outside scheduled meetings.
- All Board directors serve on several committees with varying workloads, typically requiring 1-2 days per month, including preparation and meeting attendance.

## Section V: Role of a Committee Member

Committees support the Board's work by making recommendations to help guide its decisions. Committees are composed of both Board directors and committee appointees (non-Board directors that are both RDs and members of the public). Committees do not have authority to make policy decisions without Board approval.

The College has three types of committees:

- *Statutory*. Committees required under the RHPA.
- *Non-statutory*. Committees created by the Board that are not required under the RHPA.
- *Ad Hoc*. Committees created by the Board for specific and short-term roles.

Committees have defined roles and authorities, and the Board respects their decisions without interference. Case-specific information is restricted to those on the committee.

### Statutory Committees

#### **Executive Committee**

Has the powers of the Board to act between Board meetings in circumstances requiring immediate attention. This excludes the ability to make, amend, or revoke regulations or bylaws, and the power to appoint or remove the Registrar.

#### **Health Professions Discipline Tribunal (Discipline Committee)**

Holds hearings regarding allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence.

#### **Fitness to Practise Committee**

Holds hearings to determine whether a dietitian is incapacitated (suffering from a physical or mental condition or disorder that may pose a risk to the public interest).

#### **Quality Assurance Committee**

Develops, reviews and evaluates the College's Quality Assurance program. Identifies quality standards that promote excellent dietetic care and makes related program recommendations to the Board.

### **Inquiries, Complaints, and Reports Committee**

Screening committee for concerns about the conduct, competence or capacity of dietitians.

### **Patient Relations Committee**

Administers the funding program for therapy and counselling for patients who have been sexually abused by a dietitian. Responsible for patient relations program.

### **Registration Committee**

Receives referrals from the Registrar if:

- There are doubts about whether an applicant meets the registration requirements.
- The Registrar believes terms, conditions and limitations should be imposed on a certificate of registration.

## **Non-Statutory Committees**

### **Finance and Audit Committee**

Assists the Board in fulfilling its obligations and oversight responsibilities by making recommendations relating to:

- Financial planning and reporting.
- External audits.
- Internal control systems.
- Investments and policies.

### **Governance Committee**

Makes recommendations to the Board that promote governance excellence and supports strategic decision-making related to EDI-B.



### **Professional Practice Committee**

Makes recommendations to the Board regarding professional practice standards, policies and guidelines.

### **Registrar Performance & Compensation Review Committee**

Evaluates Registrar's performance and compensation package and makes recommendations to the Board.



## Conclusion and Next Steps

Thank you for completing the Board and Committee orientation module.

To run in the CDO election or to be considered for a committee, you are required to complete a short assessment to demonstrate your understanding:

- The College of Dietitians.
- Our board and committees.
- Our role in the healthcare system.

Once you pass, you'll get a code to enter in Section 1 of your application to show you've completed the assessment.

There is no limit to the number of times you can take the assessment.

Click [here](#) to begin the assessment.