



# HEALTH CANADA GUIDELINES TO WORKING WITH PSYCHEDELICS

Implications for Registered Clinical Counsellors

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## Contents

Health Canada Guidelines to working with Psychedelics and Implications for Registered Clinical Counsellors.....	3
What is psychedelic-assisted therapy? .....	3
How do clients access Psychedelic-assisted therapy? .....	3
Definitions of Terms.....	4
What is BCACC's Role? .....	4
Scope of Practice .....	N

# Health Canada Guidelines to working with Psychedelics and Implications for Registered Clinical Counsellors.

Psychedelics have come into focus once again in the counselling and psychotherapy sphere over the past ten years. Health Canada, in recent years, changed the guidelines regarding the use of psychedelics.

In some circumstances, with the support of a legislatively regulated healthcare practitioner, it may be possible for individuals to legally access certain psychedelics through one of three pathways:

1. Clinical trials
2. Special Access Program
3. [Individual subject on 56\(1\) exemptions from the CDSA](#)

Clinical trials and Health Canada's [Special Access Program](#) are existing regulatory options through which a legal source of certain psychedelics may be accessed. These pathways should be pursued instead of an individual exemption under the CDSA. Both clinical trials and the Special Access Program have safeguards and requirements in place to protect the health and safety of patients, help ensure the quality of the drug and provide for administration and oversight by a qualified professional.

Currently, recommended access to psychedelics for the use of psychedelic-assisted therapy is through clinical trials or the Special Access Program. In both these circumstances, the support of a multidisciplinary team, appropriate risk management procedures, ethical standards, and safeguards for the client should be in place. RCC's should ensure that they ONLY offer their services to sanctioned clinical trials or programs. Clinical Trials or programs offering access and the opportunity to work with psychedelics meet the requirements for clinical trials, which can be found

- x RCCs with information and links that support increased awareness of the risks of working with adjunct tools such as psychedelics
- x Identify for the RCC, the expectation of the development of strategies to manage risks
- x links to current legislation and relevant government websites
- x resources to help individuals who may wish to explore and /or pursue training, certification, and supervision in this area.

## Scope of Practice for Registered Clinical Counsellors

Psychotherapy is the act of assessing, engaging in, and treating cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and relational distress and conditions, delivered through structured communication within a psychotherapeutic relationship of care.

In the course of practicing psychotherapy, a person may:

- a. assesses a client's behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and relational functioning
- b. determine a course of care to be delivered by psychotherapeutic approaches and means
- c. engage and treat a client's distress, conditions

The BCACC encourages all RCCs to be familiar with the BC Harm Reduction Strategies and Services Policy and Procedures (British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, 2023) when supporting individuals who are using or wish to use substances considered controlled substances, illicit or licit substance use and their role in the reduction of harm. This document defines harm reduction principles, practices and approaches that will inform the RCC.

RCCs are not considered medical professionals; therefore, their engagement with activities should be understood through this lens. This understanding is crucial for RCCs to keep their professional boundaries and ensure the safety of their clients.

RCCs cannot procure, prescribe, dispense medications, or administer them to clients. Only regulated medical professionals and other regulated health professionals authorized through profession-specific regulation in their jurisdiction to prescribe, dispense and administer controlled drugs and substances can do this, and this can only occur within a clinical trial or with the Special access program or exemption 56(1) for individuals.

RCCs can, with the appropriate training, be involved with the preparation of an individual or a group for the use of psychedelics, during the use of the psychedelic when the client is in an altered state (on a journey) and importantly, during the integration phase. (Mocanu et al., 2022, Rochester, et.al., 2021)

## What Does BCACC Expect of RCCs?

Registered Clinical Counsellors are encouraged to measure their engagement with activities, such as Psychedelic-assisted therapy, which is considered to be an adjunct tool, against the BCACC Standards of Clinical Practice in particular:

- x Standard 1: Client- Centered Care Consent
- x Standard 2: Competence and Quality Assurance
- x Standard 6: Clinical and Counselling Assessment and Reporting
- x Standard 8: Relationships, Boundaries and Conflict of Interest
- x Standard 9: Sexual Misconduct
- x Standard 12: Documentation and Record Keeping
- x Standard 13: Ethical Conduct
- x Code of Ethical Conduct

and the Health Canada guidelines for collaborating with individuals in this way. Psychedelic-assisted therapy is viewed as a supplementary tool to talk therapy as outlined in the scope of practice; therefore, it requires rigorous training, oversight, and supervision, typically within a multi-disciplinary team, to ensure public protection, exceptional clinical care, and risk management. This responsibility is a key part of the RCC's commitment to their profession and the well-being of their clients.

## How to access training and supervision

When looking for an increased understanding of working with Psychedelics, it is required that RCCs participate in a robust training course as noted in the Standard of Clinical Practice 2: Competence and Quality Assurance. (Mocanu et al., 2022, Rochester, et.al., 2021)

### What should the training include?

Courses linked with educational institutions or multi-professional teams that incorporate at the minimum all of the following:

- x Theory,



## Guidelines for use of Psychedelics through the Special Access Program





## References

## Links

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[class exempt on](#)

[individual exempt on](#)

[Guidance Document for Clinical Trial Sponsors: Clinical Trial Applicat ons](#)

[Not ce to Stakeholders: Considerat ons regarding the proposed use of psilocybin mushrooms in clinical trials, or as a drug accessed through the Special Access Program \(SAP\)](#)

[Not ce to Stakeholders – Clarificat on of Requirements under the Food and Drug Regulat ons and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act When Conduct ng Clinical Research with Psilocybin](#)

[MDMA](#)

[Psilocybin and psilocin \(Magic Mushrooms\)](#)

[Professional Pract ce Guidelines for Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Aug 2023 \(brainfutures.org\)](#)

[sap-drugs-guid-ld-eng.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#)

[PowerPoint Presentat on \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

[recent-updates-in-the-canadian-psychedelics-landscape.pdf](#)

[Psychedelics - FAQs | CAMH](#)

[2023-psychedelics-forum-report.pdf \(cpha.ca\)](#)

[Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy Pract ces and Human Caring Science: Toward a Care-Informed Model of Treatment \(watsoncaringscience.org\)](#)