

Bundled Services

Published: October 2012

Purpose

This Position Statement serves to communicate the College's interpretation of Ont. Reg. 1093, in particular section 17(1)12 "charging a fee for an unperformed service" as it pertains to veterinarians offering services that are bundled together and priced as a group entity. The College's position is that bundled services are not intended to be captured by section 17(1)12. However, in permissiveness related to this type of payment agreement, safeguards in the public interest are necessary to assure that clients clearly and fully understand the agreement made and the services to be covered.

Scope

This Position Statement applies to all Ontario veterinarians offering services to clients.



Background

Given the current economic climate and the changing demands of consumers seeking veterinary services, the veterinary profession is responding with the development of new models of service delivery. The College is in support of progressive fee structures which promote access to quality animal care and facilitate animal health generally. In considering the need to balance public protection with business innovation, the College determined that a broad set of safeguards that must be consistently present is necessary, regardless of the service and fee model adopted by a licensed veterinarian. These safeguards are intended to ensure transparency, fairness, clarity and accountability, while promoting flexibility in the delivery of and access to care.

Definition

Bundled Service: A bundled service is a set of distinct veterinary services that are listed together, and priced as a group. The bundled service may be proposed to an existing or potential client for a flat-fee along with options for payment of those services. Those set services are then delivered over a predetermined period of time.

Position

A veterinarian may bundle services if the services, fees, and payment options:

- a) are agreed to after a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) has been established;
- b) are in writing;
- c) are consented to in writing by the client;
- d) detail all services and costs that are included in the agreement;
- e) stipulate the term or predetermined period of time that the agreement covers;
- f) stipulate the payment plan in detail and clearly outline any cancellation options (including how any pre-paid, unused services will be calculated and refunded);
- g) include only those services that are and will likely continue to be consistently available within their practice;
- h) include only those services which are likely to be required by the patient during the term of the agreement; and
- i) are consistently available to all clients, who have the choice of declining a bundled service option and paying for services individually.

If the above conditions are met, a veterinarian's acceptance of full payment for bundled services before all of the services have been delivered will not be considered professional misconduct.



Legislative Authority

R.R.O. 1990, Reg 1093, s. 17(1)3, 17(1)8, 17(1)11, 17(1)12, 17(1)15, 17(1)18, 17(1)25, 17(1)44, 17(1)45. (*Veterinarians Act*)

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