



College of Respiratory  
Therapists of Ontario

Ordre des thérapeutes  
respiratoires de l'Ontario

# DISCONTINUING RT SERVICES

Practice FAQs

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## QUESTION

**If my shift is over but the RT taking over for me has not yet arrived, can I leave? I have been told that this would constitute “patient abandonment”.**

## ANSWER

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Whenever an RT is required to discontinue providing services, such as when their shift ends, then it is the RT's responsibility to ensure these services continue to be provided. If there is no RT to take over, then the departing RT must arrange for that care to be taken over by another competent healthcare professional. It is the same principle that applies if an RT were to refuse to provide a certain service, such as is the case when there is a disagreement in the plan of care. The RT's accountability is to ensure that the patient continues to receive the same care – and at the standard – as they would have done if performed by the RT themselves.

There is nothing in legislation or regulation that uses the term “patient abandonment”. However, the *Professional Misconduct* regulation (O. Reg. 753/93) views it as an act of professional misconduct for an RT to “*contravene a standard of practice of the profession or a published standard of the College...*”. The CRTO has several documents, including the [Standards of Practice](#) and [A Commitment to Ethical Practice](#), that outline the expectations that RTs consistently ensure a safe, ethical and competent transfer of RT services.