



College of Respiratory
Therapists of Ontario

Ordre des thérapeutes
respiratoires de l'Ontario

MEDICAL DIRECTIVE VS. DELEGATION

Practice FAQs

December 2018

QUESTION

What is the difference between medical directives and delegation?

ANSWER

It is important to understand that Medical Directives and Delegation are two completely different processes. **Delegation** is that transfer of legal authority (from a healthcare professional who has the authority to perform a particular controlled act to a healthcare professional who does not), whereas a **Medical Directive** is a type of order.

As outlined in the CRTO [CRTO Orders for Medical Care PPG](#) (pp. 10 – 11) & the CRTO [Position Statement on Medical Directives](#), there are two types of orders:

1. A Direct Order (naming an individual patient)
2. A Medical Directive (for a broad group/type of patient)

To perform the controlled acts that have been authorized to RTs via the [Respiratory Therapy Act \(RTA\)](#), an **Order** (either a direct order or a medical directive) is required in almost every situation*.

*please note that an order is not required for authorized acts #3 or #5 when performed outside of a public hospital.

The controlled acts authorized to RTs via the *RTA* are:

1. *Performing a prescribed procedure below the dermis.*
2. *Intubation beyond the point in the nasal passages where they normally narrow or beyond the larynx.*
3. *Suctioning beyond the point in the nasal passages where they normally narrow or beyond the larynx.*
4. *Administering a substance by injection or inhalation.*
5. *Administering a prescribed substance by inhalation.*

To perform controlled acts that have not been authorized to RTs via the *RTA* (e.g., defibrillation, which falls under the controlled act – ...*the application of a form of energy*), both **Delegation** and an **Order** is required.

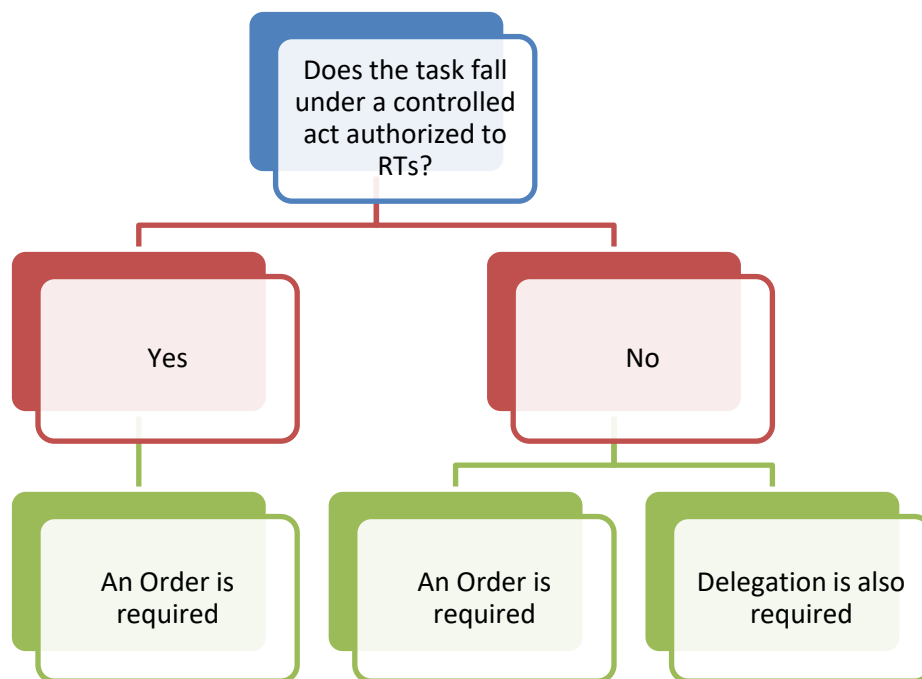


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This is because the legal authority to perform the task must first be transferred to the RT (i.e., it must be delegated to the RT). Once the task has been properly delegated, the RT may perform the task provided they have a valid order. For more information, please see the CRTO [Delegation of Controlled Acts](#) Professional Practice Guideline.

The flowchart below may help you determine whether an order or both an order and delegation is required.



If more information is required on this or other professional practice matters, please contact Carole Hamp, RRT – CRTO Manager of Quality Practice at hamp@crto.on.ca.