Professional Standards of Practice for Opticians in the Province of Ontario
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Introduction

The College of Opticians of Ontario registers opticians in Ontario. All registrants of the College of Opticians of Ontario must meet competency based educational requirements and pass examinations related to dispensing. “Dispensing” is defined as the preparation, adaptation, and delivery of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or subnormal vision devices to a person. Registration also requires that opticians keep their knowledge and skills current through continuing education.

The College of Opticians of Ontario regulates the practice of opticianry and governs its members in accordance with legislation, regulations and by-laws. In addition, it has among its objects the development, establishment and maintenance of standards of practice to assure the quality of practice of the profession. In carrying out its objects, it has a duty to serve and protect the public interest.

All opticians shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with applicable legislation and the regulations, by-laws and standards of practice of the College of Opticians of Ontario.

Purpose and Scope of the College of Opticians of Ontario Standards

The Standards of Practice serve the following purpose:

1. The Standards of Practice set out the College’s expectations for how members will conduct themselves in their practice.
2. They provide the College of Opticians of Ontario with benchmarks against which it can measure members’ conduct in the course of investigating complaints, as well as in peer assessments and quality assurance reviews.
3. They provide the public with a clear understanding of the quality of care they should receive from an Optician.

The College of Opticians of Ontario is legally required to develop, establish and maintain programs and standards of practice to assure the quality of the practice of the profession of Opticianry. The College is also responsible for developing, establishing and maintaining standards of knowledge and skill and programs to promote continuing competence among the members; and to develop, establish and maintain standards of professional ethics for its members.

Review Frequency

The Council of the College of Opticians will review the Standards of Practice at least every three years or as required.
Overview

Standard 1: Competence

The optician shall conduct him or herself so that patients receive the optician’s most effective performance.

Standard 2: Professional Conduct

The optician shall meet the ethical and legal requirements of the profession.

Standard 3: Dispensing of Appropriate Optical Devices

The optician shall dispense optical devices appropriate to the patient.

Standard 4: Safety and Infection Control in the Practice Environment

The optician must take reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and subsequent transmission of infectious agents within their professional practices. The practice site should be equipped and maintained, and that procedures are in place, to assure health and safety for both patients and staff.

Standard 5: Record Keeping

An optician must retain complete and accurate patient records.

Standard 6: Patient Relations

The optician shall take reasonable steps to ensure patient comprehension of any process. The optician shall ensure that patient confidentiality is maintained at all times and that he or she has informed consent to provide health care services to a person.
Standard 1: Competence

The optician shall conduct him or herself so that patients receive the optician’s most effective performance.

Criteria

1. Each optician is responsible for maintaining his or her competence.

2. Each optician is responsible for evaluating his or her own educational needs and meeting those needs through programs of continuing education.

3. The optician shall only perform tasks for which he or she has sufficient knowledge, skill and judgment to perform competently and safely, and shall not engage in tasks that are beyond his or her capacity to perform.

4. The optician will refer, or assist patients to find the necessary professional help when the condition or status of the patient falls outside his or her scope of practice, education or experience.

5. The optician shall not engage in the practice of opticianry while his or her ability to do so is compromised or impaired.

6. The optician shall ensure that he or she meets the quality assurance requirements as specified in the Quality Assurance Regulation of the College of Opticians.

7. The optician shall maintain current knowledge of legislation, standards, guidelines and policies pertaining to the delivery of opticianry care.

8. The optician is responsible for inspecting any product, and determining the appropriateness of any advice or recommendation that is provided to a patient.
Standard 2: Professional Conduct

The optician shall meet the ethical and legal requirements of the profession.

Criteria


2. The optician is responsible for the professional actions and consequences of actions of any student or intern that they have agreed to supervise.

3. Opticians are required to report any incident of unauthorized practice to the College of Opticians of Ontario. Unauthorized practice is defined as dispensing eyeglasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices without being a registered member of the College of Opticians, the College of Optometrists or the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

4. An optician shall only provide treatment which they know or believe is appropriate to meet the needs of the patient.

5. An optician shall only continue treatment of a patient where such need is indicated and where the treatment continues to be effective.

6. The optician shall act in a manner that is consistent with the Human Rights Code.
Standard 3: Dispensing of Appropriate Optical Devices

The optician shall dispense optical devices appropriate to the patient.

1. **The Prescription (Rx)**

*Under subsection 5(1) of the Opticianry Act, a member shall not dispense eyeglasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices except on the prescription of an optometrist or physician.*

**Criteria**

a) In order for a prescription to be valid, it must contain the following information:

i) The name of a prescriber;

ii) The patient’s name;

iii) The patient’s prescription; and

iv) The date of examination

b) Opticians must inform their patients of the importance of regular eye examinations and recommend that patients have their eyes tested regularly.

c) The optician will retain a copy of the prescription for a period of 7 years. The optician will make available the original or copy of the prescription, when requested to do so, provided it includes the prescriber name and date of examination.

d) In an extenuating circumstance, an optician may duplicate the prescription currently being worn by a patient. Duplication must be noted in the patient’s file. The optician must explain to the patient that it is important to have regular eye examinations.

e) An optician must communicate with the prescriber if there is any doubt whether the prescription is valid or if the prescription appears to be incomplete.

f) An optician must analyse a patient’s optical requirements in conjunction with a prescription issued by a prescriber.
2. **Dispensing Eyeglasses**

*Dispensing includes the preparation, adaptation, and delivery of eyeglasses, contact lenses and subnormal vision devices*

**Criteria**

**When dispensing eyeglasses, the optician must:**

a) Review with the patient any relevant environmental, occupational, avocational, and/or physical factors affecting eyeglass wear;

b) Review the details of the prescription in accordance with the standards of practice.

c) Advise the patient regarding appropriate ophthalmic lenses and frames;

d) Take appropriate measurements for the eyeglasses being dispensed to ensure proper function;

e) Verify the accuracy of the completed eyeglasses to ensure they are as ordered and within tolerance;

f) Fit and adapt the eyeglasses to the patient;

g) Counsel the patient on aspects of eyeglasses wear including, but not limited to the use, expectations, limitations, customary adaptation period and maintenance requirements of the eyeglasses and;

h) In the case of safety eyewear, adhere to appropriate safety standards (e.g., CSA, ANSI, ISO).

**Guidelines**

i) Eyeglasses cannot be dispensed in the absence of a patient-practitioner relationship.

ii) Prior to delivery, a physical, in person meeting between the optician and patient is necessary to fit and adapt the completed eyeglasses, and ensure that they are appropriate to the patient’s needs. This should not be performed virtually.

iii) The optician must exercise professional judgment when using or considering whether to use a technology during any part of the eyeglasses dispensing process. This includes the preparation, adaptation and delivery of the eyeglasses. Regardless of the technology used, the optician is responsible for ensuring appropriate patient care and outcomes in accordance with the standards of practice.
3. **Dispensing Contact Lenses**

“Dispensing” includes the preparation, adaptation, and delivery of eyeglasses, contact lenses and subnormal vision devices.

**Criteria**

3.1 **Initial Contact Lens Fitting**

a) The optician must take a patient history and determine the suitability of the patient for contact lens wear. Special emphasis must be given to the analysis of:

i) the health of the cornea, conjunctiva and lids, and the integrity of the tear layer;
ii) corneal curvature clarity and integrity; and
iii) relevant environmental, occupational, avocational and systemic health factors.

b) The optician must counsel the patient about the effects that contact lens wear may have on the health of the eye including advantages, risks of complications and limitations of contact lens wear.

c) In fitting contact lenses, the optician must determine, by diagnostic fitting and/or calculation, what lenses are appropriate for the patient. The initial lenses must be evaluated on the patient’s eyes and subsequent modifications of the lens parameters must be made as required based upon factors that may include:

i) lens appearance and fitting;
ii) comfort with diagnostic lens in place;
iii) corneal clarity and integrity;
iv) conjunctival and lid appearance;
v) tear characteristics;
vi) monocular and binocular visual acuity; and
vii) replacement schedule.

d) Verify the accuracy of the contact lenses to ensure they are as ordered and, where applicable, within tolerance;

e) The optician must provide and record any relevant details of instructions or recommendations to the patient with respect to:

i) hygiene;
ii) lens insertion and removal;
iii) lens care regime;
iv) recommended wearing times and replacement schedules;
v) normal and abnormal adaptive symptoms;
vi) contraindications to lens use;
vii) progress evaluations; and
viii) how and when to access emergency care.
f) The optician must examine the patient during the adaptation period to assess lens performance, adaptation and compliance.

g) The optician must develop an appropriate ongoing patient management plan. This includes determining when the patient should return to the optician for contact lens refills or for further evaluation.

h) The optician must record the results of all evaluations performed and all recommendations provided to the patient.

3.2 Continuing Care

In providing continuing care to established contact lens patients, the optician must:

a) review the ongoing patient management plan, considering any relevant factors such as:
   i) any changes in the patient’s eye health and other personal circumstances;
   ii) changes to the patient’s occupation; and
   iii) the time elapsed since the patient last met with an eye care professional in person.

b) review with the patient (as appropriate):
   i) the age, wearing and replacement schedule of current contact lenses;
   ii) the efficacy of the current lens care regime; and
   iii) any adverse reactions associated with contact lens wear.

c) assess the patient to determine relevant factors, such as:
   i) lens appearance and fit;
   ii) wearing time;
   iii) comfort with lenses in place;
   iv) corneal clarity and integrity;
   v) stable corneal curvature;
   vi) conjunctival and lid appearance;
   vii) tear characteristics;
   viii) visual acuity; and
   ix) compliance with recommendations on lens handling, lens care, and replacement.

d) provide and implement management plans for any problems identified, making recommendations for further care and counsel the patient as necessary.

3.3 Replacement Contact Lens Services

a) Where a person seeking replacement contact lenses is not an established contact lens patient, the patient visit must be treated as an initial fitting.
b) When providing replacement contact lenses services for an established contact lens patient, the optician must:

i) **ensure the patient’s clinical information is current and if not, treat the patient visit as an initial fitting to the extent necessary in the circumstances;**

ii) determine the need for alterations to previous lens specifications and make adjustments accordingly;

iii) advise the patient as to the need for and extent of continuing care;

iv) confirm the parameters of contact lenses as ordered; and

v) provide follow-up services in accordance with the management plan.

**Guidelines**

i) Contact lenses cannot be dispensed in the absence of a patient-practitioner relationship.

ii) If the patient previously wore contact lenses, the following details should be recorded (if known): the previous type of lens, modality of wear, solutions, base curves, diameter, power, how long the patient has worn contact lenses, and who dispensed them.

iii) A physical, in person meeting between the optician and patient is necessary during initial selection and fitting of contact lenses and for required follow up care. An in person meeting may also be necessary when providing continuing care and dispensing refills to established patients, in order to meet the standards of practice and to ensure appropriate patient care.

iv) The optician must exercise professional judgment when using or considering whether to use a technology during any part of the contact lens dispensing process. Regardless of the technology used, the optician is responsible for ensuring appropriate patient care and outcomes.
4. Sub-normal Vision Devices

“Dispensing” includes the preparation, adaptation, and delivery of eyeglasses, contact lenses and subnormal vision devices.

When assessing a patient for and providing low vision devices, the optician must:

a) Review with the patient any relevant environmental, occupational, avocational, and/or physical factors;

b) Review any referral or prescription details in accordance with the standards of practice.

c) Advise the patient regarding appropriate ophthalmic appliance(s);

d) Take appropriate measurements when fabricating any custom appliances;

e) Verify the accuracy of any completed appliances, to ensure they meet required tolerances;

f) Fit and adapt the appliance to the patient; and

g) Counsel the patient on aspects of appliance usage such as expectations, limitations, customary adaptation period and maintenance requirements.

Guidelines

A low vision assessment generally will include the following components:

i) A comprehensive patient history that explores specific visual concerns, risk factors, visual and ocular history, family ocular history, general health, medications, and vocational/avocational requirements.

ii) A review of the results of the patient’s refractive and eye health examination and reassessment as necessary, of visual acuity.

iii) Binocular and oculomotor status, ocular health and the effectiveness of current spectacles and low vision devices

iv) Patient education regarding visual status, treatment options and prognosis.

v) Management plan individualized for the patient’s needs.

vi) Discussion and/or demonstration of potential optical, non-optical, and electronic aids and devices

vii) Appropriate follow-up, arranged as needed, to assess the effectiveness of treatment and to monitor the patient’s visual condition and needs.
5. **Websites and Other Technology**

If the optician chooses to use a website, or other technology as part of his or her opticianry practice, the optician must ensure that the website or interface:

a) complies with the College’s advertising regulation (O. Reg. 219/94);

b) **is identified as belonging or referring to a member registered with the College of Opticians of Ontario**;

c) only collects, records or transmits patient information if it can be done in a private and secure manner and in compliance with the College’s standards and applicable privacy and anti-spam legislation;

d) **identifies the physical location of the clinic or dispensary where the optician practises, including address and city, and the hours of operation** of the clinic or dispensary; and

e) includes the telephone number to contact the clinic or dispensary.

**Guidelines**

i) An optician whose employer uses a website, or other technology, as part of an opticianry practice must encourage the employer to comply with College’s standards and applicable privacy and anti-spam legislation.

ii) Regardless of the technology employed, the optician must adhere to the standards and guidelines for dispensing of eyeglasses, contact lenses and subnormal vision devices set out above.
Standard 4: Safety and Infection Control in the Practice Environment

The optician must take reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and subsequent transmission of infectious agents within their professional practices. The practice site should be equipped and maintained, and that procedures are in place, to assure health and safety for both patients and staff.

Criteria:

1. The optician must adhere to all federal, provincial and municipal requirements and must extend best efforts to ensure the practice environment is compliant.

2. The optician should familiarize themselves with current techniques used to disinfect the office and control transmission of infectious agents.

3. The optician should devise and/or follow a protocol that outlines frequency and specific responsibility for disinfection of the practice and instrumentation.

4. Routine precautions should be followed at all times (e.g., hand washing and appropriate waste disposal).

Health Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have information specifically regarding infection control guidelines and health alerts, including pandemic plans.

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/

Standard 5: Record Keeping

An optician must retain complete and accurate patient records.

1. Contents of Records

A patient record must clearly and legibly include the following information:

a) The patient’s contact information
b) A patient history, including information about the patient’s general and optical health, occupation, and avocation(s)
c) Date of last refraction including practitioner’s name and address
d) Complete details of a patient’s prescription, including the name of the prescriber, and the date of examination
e) All details of the ophthalmic appliance dispensed
f) The identity of the optician who fit, verified, and delivered the optical appliance
g) The ongoing management plan for the patient, including the program or schedule for follow up
h) If a patient fails to attend or respond to follow up notifications, a notation to this effect
i) If eyeglasses were duplicated from those currently worn by the patient, a notation to this effect

2. Retaining Records

a) An optician must ensure that all patient records are retained for seven years from the date of the last entry
b) An optician must maintain his or her records in a manner that ensures that a patient or authorized College investigator, assessor or representative has access to the records.
c) An optician who is a health information custodian must ensure that files are not abandoned when the optician retires or sells his or her practice. The optician must ensure that files are transferred securely and in accordance with applicable privacy legislation.

3. Privacy Requirements

An optician must maintain patient health records in a manner that complies with all applicable privacy legislation.

In order to meet this standard, an optician must:

a) Understand who the health information custodian is at each place of practice, and understand his or her legal obligations as either a health information custodian or an agent of a health information custodian
b) Collect only personal health information that is necessary in the circumstances
c) Collect, use, and disclose personal health information only with consent unless otherwise permitted or required to do so by law.

d) Ensure that patient personal health information is accurate, complete, and up to date.

e) Ensure that personal health information is retained, transferred and disposed of securely and in accordance with any legislative requirements.

f) Ensure patients can access, and if necessary, correct their personal health information subject to legislative requirements.

Guidelines

Opticians are expected to be familiar with all applicable privacy legislation (e.g., the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act).

The standards of practice for record keeping also apply to records retained electronically. Opticians who keep electronic records are expected to ensure that a copy (e.g., scan) of the prescription and all other records are retained securely and in compliance with all applicable privacy legislation.

Third Party Storage Guidelines

Section 14 of the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA) permits opticians to store patient records at secure third-party storage sites only if they obtain patient consent, keep the records in a reasonable manner, and comply with any guidelines published by the College.

The following guidelines apply when an optician stores patient records at a third-party storage site:

i) The storage facility should have a privacy policy that is consistent with PHIPA and the College’s record keeping requirements.

ii) The optician should obtain written assurance that the facility will safeguard the information and only disclose it if the optician specifically requests this.

iii) If the facility will destroy the records at a later date, the optician should contract with the facility to retain the records for the period of time required by the College and destroy the records in a secure manner.

iv) The optician should keep the account with the storage facility current at all times to ensure that records are not destroyed prematurely.

v) The optician should keep records of what files are retained at the third-party site.

vi) If the optician is in active practice, the optician’s privacy policy should state that the optician uses a third-party storage site.
Standard 6: Patient Relations

The optician shall take reasonable steps to ensure patient comprehension of any process. The optician shall ensure that patient confidentiality is maintained at all times and that he or she has informed consent to provide health care services to a person.

Criteria

1. The optician will provide complete, accurate information concerning the steps of procedures to be taken in terms the patient can be reasonably expected to understand.

2. An optician is not permitted to reveal any confidential information about a patient to anyone, except insofar as it is required for the treatment of the patient, and then only to those who have a need to know and with the consent of the patient or as permitted or required by applicable legislation.

3. Case discussion, consultation, telephone conversations, examination and treatment that could reasonably be expected to have an expectation of privacy should be carried out in private.

4. The optician must seek permission from the patient for any individuals, including students, not directly involved in the patient care to be present during assessment or treatment.

Guidelines

Depending on the circumstances, consent may be written or verbal, and may be express or implied.

Consent may be implied when taking a patient’s history, or when transferring a prescription to another optician who is acting on behalf of the patient.

In other circumstances, express consent may be required. For example, an optician will usually need to obtain express consent before touching a patient’s face in order to adjust eyeglasses. As well, express consent is usually needed to disclose a patient’s health information to someone who is not in the patient’s circle of care.

Opticians should be familiar with legislation about consent, including the Health Care Consent Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.