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 every three years or more frequently 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 7: Websites and Other Technology

An optician who uses or is affiliated with a website or other technology interface as part of his or her opticianry practice, shall ensure that the interface complies with the College’s Standards of Practice.

Standard 8: Refraction

An optician must obtain a refracting designation from the College and must adhere to the Standards of Practice in order to refract.
STANDARDS OF PRACTICE
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 sub-normal 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 services which they know or believe is appropriate to meet the needs of the patient.

5. An optician shall only continue to provide services to a patient where such need is indicated and where the services continue to be effective.

6. The optician shall act in a manner that is consistent with the Human Rights Code and all applicable accessibility legislation.

7. An optician must be reasonably available to the patient for consultation.
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) When an optician duplicates the prescription currently being worn by a patient, the 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 (ANSI); 

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.

i) Ensure that the practice environment has the appropriate tools and equipment.

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 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 develop an appropriate ongoing patient management plan. This includes determining when the patient should return to the optician for an assessment of lens performance, adaptation and compliance; for contact lens refills; or for further evaluation.

g) 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 relevant 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.

4. Sub-normal Vision Devices (e.g., Low 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.
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 (including health and safety) 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.

Criteria:

1. Contents of Records

A patient record must clearly and legibly include the following information appropriate to the appliance that you are dispensing:

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) Complete details of a patient’s prescription, including the name of the prescriber, and the date of examination
d) All details of the ophthalmic appliance dispensed
e) The identity of the optician who fit, verified, and delivered the optical appliance
f) The ongoing management plan for the patient, including the program or schedule for follow up
g) If a patient fails to attend or respond to follow up notifications, a notation to this effect
h) 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.
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.
Standard 7: Websites and Other Technology

An optician who uses or is affiliated with a website or other technology interface as part of his or her opticianry practice, shall ensure that the interface complies with the College’s Standards of Practice.

If the optician uses or is affiliated with 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) provides reasonable and timely access to an optician;

c) identifies the full name and registration number of any optician who interacts with a patient through the website or interface;

d) 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 of practice and applicable privacy and anti-spam legislation;

e) complies with all applicable standards of practice.
Standard 8: Refraction

An optician must obtain a refracting designation from the College and must adhere to the following criteria in order to refract.

These criteria have been developed to ensure the highest possible level of patient care and to maximize patient choice and access to services within current legislation. The three scenarios outlined in clause 7 reflect the diversity in models of interprofessional collaboration in Ontario's vision care sector and allow opticians and prescribers to choose the approach that best serves their patients’ as well as their own needs in varying circumstances.

1. An optician must have successfully completed a training program, which includes an examination component that meets the most current refracting competencies established by College of Opticians of Ontario (COO). The respective training program will not be included within the general curriculum of the opticianry program, but will be available as a post-graduate course. COO will provide a list of all accredited education programs.

2. Each optician intending to refract must first apply to COO for ‘refracting designation’ through a process established by COO. Each optician who receives refracting designation will be issued a seal by the COO that is to be affixed to the optician's certificate of registration.

3. An optician who has obtained refracting designation must also accumulate annually an additional two (2) accredited continuing education hours related to refraction.

4. Each refracting optician must complete the Patient Acknowledgment Form attached to this Standard of Practice for each patient and send a copy/facsimile of all completed forms to the COO on a quarterly basis.

5. An optician must ensure that he or she has the appropriate equipment to perform refraction such as, but not necessarily limited to, automated refraction equipment, phoroptor, trial lenses, retinoscope and visual acuity charts.

6. An optician must not prepare and dispense vision devices based on the results of the refraction performed without a prescription, as set out in clause 7.

7. An optician may dispense vision devices when the optician has a prescription from an authorized prescriber. Dispensing may occur under three generic scenarios:

(a) The patient has seen an authorized prescriber for a full oculo visual assessment within the last 365 days. The authorized prescriber has issued a written prescription for the patient indicating that the patient requires an optical appliance subject to determination of the refractive error of the eye by an optician.

In this circumstance, the optician may perform refraction and dispense the appropriate eyewear based on the results of the refraction. The results of the refraction and information on the optical
appliance dispensed must be provided to the authorized prescriber as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days from the date that the refraction was conducted.

(b) The patient has seen an authorized prescriber for a full oculo visual assessment within the last 365 days. Pursuant to the patient's health status meeting a set of predetermined conditions, the prescriber has authorized the optician to dispense an optical appliance based on the optician's determination of the refractive status of the eye and on any other information the prescriber may have provided.

In this circumstance, the authorized prescriber has determined that the health of a patient satisfies certain predetermined health standards, where the prescriber has then authorized the optician to perform the refraction and dispense the appropriate eyewear based on the results of that refraction and any other additional information that the prescriber has provided. The results of the refractive error determination and information on the optical appliance dispensed must be provided to the authorized prescriber as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days from the date that the refraction was conducted.

(c) The patient has seen an authorized prescriber for a full oculo visual assessment within the last 365 days. The optician receives a referral from a prescriber to perform a refraction on a patient in order to assist the prescriber in preparing a prescription.

In this circumstance, the optician may perform the refraction and must provide the results of that refraction to the referring practitioner as soon as possible. The optician may subsequently receive a prescription from the authorized prescriber reflecting the results of the refraction, whereupon the optician may dispense appropriate eyewear to the patient.

8. An optician must use her or his knowledge, skills and judgment to refer to a physician or optometrist any indication or complications in the patient’s visual or general health that comes to the attention of the optician as a result of performing the refraction.

9. In addition to the patient’s file, the refraction health record for every patient upon whom an optician has performed a refraction must contain:

   (a) The date of the refraction,

   (b) Name of optician performing refraction and College registration number,

   (c) Patient Acknowledgment Form (one completed copy per patient must be provided to the College by mail or facsimile on March 31, June 30, Sept 30 and Dec 31 of each year),

   (d) Results of the refraction,

   (e) Name of the prescriber, date and details of the prescription, as well as any other instructions.

10 The optician must expend her or his best efforts, in conjunction with the authorized prescriber, to ensure that the Canadian Ophthalmological Society evidence-based Clinical Practice Guidelines
for periodic eye examinations in adults in Canada are adhered to.

11. An optician is prohibited from performing refractions other than in accordance with the provisions of this standard of practice.