



COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS OF ALBERTA

Your Vision, Our Focus

Standards of Practice

College of Opticians of Alberta

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College of Opticians of Alberta

Regulating Opticians

Introduction

The College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) registers opticians in Alberta. All registrants of the COA must meet competency based educational requirements and pass examinations related to dispensing. (See appendix A for definition) Registration also requires that Opticians keep their knowledge and skills current through continuing competency.

The COA regulates the practice of opticianry and governs its members in accordance with legislation, regulations, by-laws, *standards, policies, code of ethics and codes of conduct*. In addition, it has among its objectives the development, establishment and maintenance of standards of practice to assure the quality of practice of the profession. In carrying out its objectives, 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, rules, codes, policies and standards of practice and ethics of the College of Opticians of Alberta.

Purpose and Scope of the College of Opticians of Alberta 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 Alberta with benchmarks against which it can measure members' conduct in the course of investigating complaints.
3. They provide the COA with benchmarks against which it can measure members' conduct in the course of performing peer assessments and quality assurance reviews.
4. They provide the public with a clear understanding of the quality of care they *can expect to* receive from an Optician.

The College of Opticians of Alberta is legally required:

1. To develop, establish and maintain programs and standards of practice to assure the quality of the practice of the profession of Opticianry.
2. To develop, establish and maintain standards of knowledge and skill and programs to promote continuing competence among the members;
3. To develop, establish and maintain standards of professional ethics for its members.

Practice Statement from the Health Professions Act

In their practice, opticians do one or more of the following:

1. based on an optical prescription, design, supply, prepare, adjust and dispense optical appliances and prostheses, including corrective lenses,
2. promote eye health and the correct use of optical appliances and prostheses through education of consumers and regulated members,
3. perform refractions and identify the need for corrective lenses,
4. conduct or collaborate in optical related research,
5. when providing professional services referred to in this section, conduct assessments and make referrals where appropriate, and
6. provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations.

Standard 1

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring that they maintain appropriate levels of professional competence.

All opticians are subject to requirements of a continuing competency program.

This contains several steps

1. a self assessment which involves comparing themselves to the competency profile.
2. design of a plan to address areas where competency can be improved.
3. collection of the required credits in the appropriate areas to address identified goals
4. report of successes to the College.

All opticians are also subject to practice audits in the form of peer assessments as part of the competency program

Standard 2

Each Registered Optician is responsible to practice at all times within their competence limitations.

Even if you are licensed to perform a task, if you have not maintained competence in that area you should not perform the duties involved.

Standard 3

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring that their place of employment has available for their use appropriate facilities, tools and equipment to allow them to comply with the standards of practice.

Eyeglasses

A licensed eyeglass optician must be on the premises when eyeglasses are being dispensed subject to the requirements for dispensing corrective lenses in Standard 7. With permission of a Registered Optician, a non-licensee may deliver eyeglasses. The registered optician will be held accountable for all eyeglasses sold, dispensed or adjusted from the dispensary. Annual Certificate of Registration must be prominently displayed for every optician in a dispensary.

Each registered optician is responsible for maintaining in good condition, adequate tools, instruments and items necessary for fitting, dispensing and adjusting eyeglasses.

The following tools and instruments must be on the premises at all times:

1. lensometer;
2. adjustment and bench tools;
3. lens clock (gauge);
4. pupillometer and/or mm pd ruler and penlight;
5. frame heater;
6. pd ruler;
7. tool to measure vertex distance;
8. thickness calipers;
9. distance and near visual acuity charts
10. tolerance charts;
11. frame and lens cleaning products; and
12. other such equipment and instruments as the COA indicates from time to time are necessary to maintain the standard of practice of the profession.

Contact Lenses

A Contact Lens Practitioner must be on the premises when contact lenses are being dispensed subject to the requirements for dispensing corrective lenses in Standard 7. A Contact Lens Practitioner may put aside contact lenses, for which the client has already been assessed for pick up by the client. Without permission of a Registered Contact Lens Practitioner, no one shall dispense contact lenses from a location. The Contact Lens Practitioner will be held accountable for all contact lenses sold, dispensed or adjusted from the dispensary.

Each contact lens practitioner is responsible for maintaining in good condition, adequate tools, instruments and items necessary for fitting, dispensing and adjusting contact lenses.

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The following tools, instruments and items must be on the premises:

1. keratometer/ophthalmometer;
2. slit lamp/biomicroscope;
3. lensometer;
4. method of disinfecting tools, equipment and lenses.
5. distance and near visual acuity charts.
6. appropriate solutions for caring for lenses
7. currently dated solutions for caring for lenses
8. currently dated starter kits for patients
9. diagnostic trial lenses
10. sodium fluorescein

If fitting Rigid Contact lenses must also have:

11. radiuscope or equivalent;
12. loupe

Standard 4

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring that their place of employment is a clean and safe environment.

Each eyeglass dispensary must be sanitary, provide proper lighting facilities and mirrors. The dispensary must provide the optician easy accessibility to hot and cold running water.

An optician must know *and apply* safe working practices with regards to Infection Control Procedures.

An optician must know *and apply* safe working practices with regards to chemical, electrical, fire and noise hazards. Each optician should have the ability to perform basic first aid including knowledge of CPR .

Policy statements, procedure and equipment manuals, a first aid kit and emergency telephone numbers are to be kept on site in office manuals and should be available at all times.

Each contact lens dispensary must ensure a suitable surrounding to accommodate fitting and measurement equipment and allow for privacy and safety of the patient.

Standard 5

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring that they comply with appropriate Privacy Legislation.

All information collected in the course of fitting and dispensing ophthalmic appliances belongs to the patient. Each Registered Optician is a custodian of patient information and as such must comply with retention use and disclosure requirements laid out in law.

An Optician must maintain all patient files for a minimum of seven years from date of last entry. Files must be stored in a secure location and not left open for others to view. All Opticians, as regulated health professionals, are responsible to ensure the customer/patient's rights of privacy.

File information being disposed of may be put in the garbage if it is non-identifiable. If personal information is contained this information should be shredded. Upon retirement or closing of a practice files still must be accessible to the patient for seven years. The College office should be notified as to where the files are being sent.

Each fitting must generate and record the following information legibly. Each file must contain:

- Patient's name
- Date each transaction performed,
- Identifier for who performed the fitting and dispensing *of the ophthalmic appliance*
 - Identifier for who is responsible for the fitting and dispensing *if a student has been involved*
- Identifier for who performed follow up care for contact lenses
- Release of information to the patient or another practitioner
 - Date, reason, who released to, authorization if any.
- Name of prescriber and date last seen,
- Patients optical prescription,
- Duplication information if applicable
- Record of payment including third party billings.

For eyeglasses

Each file must have the following patient information:

- Placement of optical centers vertically if not at datum line,
- Placement of the optical center horizontally
- Placement of bifocal/multifocal heights,

Each file must have the following lens and frame information:

- Lens type including index of refraction and brand,
- Coating or treatments provided for lenses,
- Safety features including special thickness given,

For Contact Lenses

Each file must have the following patient information:

1. patient history;
2. visual acuity;
3. keratometer/ophthalmometer readings;
4. observations from a slit lamp/biomicroscope evaluation including pathological or physiological anomalies;
5. base curve, diameter and Rx of contact lenses lens type, including manufacturer and colour
6. patient's wearing expectations
7. solution instructions for lens disinfection
8. placement of bifocal/multifocal heights if applicable.

Each file should have the following lens information:

9. HVID (horizontal visible iris diameter);
10. tear quality TBUT
11. pupil size, when necessary (in bright and dim light);
12. fissure size;
13. expected date of follow up

Follow up visits

At each subsequent visit date and changes made must be recorded. Initial follow up rechecks should be done within the recommended lifetime of a disposable lens or within one month for a non disposable lens. This recheck must be after sufficient trial period according to the lens specifications.

Annual follow up is recommended after initial fitting is complete and subsequent visits are recommended at least every two years.

Refracting

1. If an optician intends to refract, he or she must apply to the College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) for refracting designation through a process established by the COA.
2. 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, phoropter, trial lenses, retinoscope and visual acuity charts.
3. An optician must use her or his knowledge, skills and judgment to refer 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 when and to whom is appropriate.
4. All prescriptions generated for use in preparing eyeglasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices must be signed by a lawful prescriber.
5. All prescriptions that are paid for with money or the purchase of product must be sent for signatures even if no actual dispensing takes place.

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6. In addition to the patient's file, the refraction health record for every patient upon whom an optician has performed a refraction must contain:
 - Date of refraction
 - Name of optician performing the refraction and College registration number,
 - Patient consent form,
 - Results of the refraction
 - Name of Prescriber
 - Signature of Prescriber

Required Procedures for Fitting or Re-fitting of Ophthalmic appliances

Each optician must routinely:

1. evaluate every optical prescription and advise patient of suitability of lenses and frames with the knowledge of occupational needs, hobbies and cosmetics;
2. evaluate every optical prescription and advise patient of suitability of lenses and frames with knowledge of optics and geometric physics applied to the product purchased;
3. advise patient of the consequences of changes in their prescription with regard to expectations for new eyewear purchased;
4. analyze changes in prescription with regards to medical complications indicated;
5. endeavour to meet the patients needs and expectations with regard to safety aesthetics and price;
6. provide follow up care including adjustment and advice to make wear easier and maintenance more effective;
7. be able to recall or locate applicable information in detail on their patients eyeglasses and or contact lenses;
8. recognize anomalies in prescription and wearing success and to refer the patient to a medical practitioner, if required;
9. evaluate every pair of eyeglasses, or contact lenses using tolerance charts before dispensing, for all possible controllable parameters.

Upon dispensing an Optician should verify the following;

- Patients needs have been identified and discussed,
- Vision requirements have been appropriately met,
- Patient understands required maintenance for their eyeglasses and or contact lenses,
- Patient understands the necessity of and availability of follow up care.

Standard 6

Each Registered Optician will recognize limitations in expertise or scope and therefore the need for referral.

Referrals

Referral to another suitable health professional will be given, if appropriate, in a timely manner.

If appropriate a referral should be accompanied by supporting documentation including assessments and specifics leading to the referral. Referral letters and the reply to the referral must become part of the patient record. Telephone referrals must be documented in the patient's record. Transfer of information between optical offices and or practitioners must also be recorded in the patient's file. Patients rights of privacy and consent must be adhered to during referral.

Prescriptions

Prescriptions for eyeglasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices do not expire; however an Optician must inform their patient of the importance of regular eye health assessments and recommend that patients have their eyes tested regularly.

For further information see guidelines laid out by the Ophthalmological Society of Canada regarding referrals for eye examinations.

Regulations state 10(2)

A regulated member who dispenses corrective lenses for the purpose of dispensing eyeglasses may do so only

- (a) in accordance with a prescription form a person who is authorized to prescribe corrective lenses, or
- (b) when the lenses are being duplicated with no change in refractive value.

Visual Acuties

It is recommended that any patient who is not able to reach visual acuties of 20/40 in best corrected eye, with their prescription device, be informed that they are borderline for driving in accordance with "the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators Medical Standards for Drivers"

Although 20/50 is the lower limit for class five licensure in Canada, it is recommended that Opticians refer under 20/40 to determine driving capabilities. When performing a refraction the patient must be informed that they require further assessment.

Standard 7

Each Registered Optician who is a practicum supervisor is responsible all activities carried out by a student under their supervision.

Students

Student refers to any person employed in the optical field and registered and currently participating in an approved optical course. A registered eyeglass or contact lens practitioner, optometrist or ophthalmologist may be a practicum supervisor.

It is the responsibility of the practicum supervisor to determine when a student is proficient enough to perform particular duties with on site supervision, i.e. frame adjustment. Until that time all activities of a student must be performed with direct supervision. Delivery of the ophthalmic product does not require supervision.

The practicum supervisor will be held accountable for all activities carried out by a student under their supervision. All aspects of the supervision as laid out by the optical program at NAIT and all activities of the Field supervision program must be complied with.

For the purposes of this document the following definitions are applicable regardless of their meaning in other documents.

Direct Supervision

A registered supervisor is observing and analyzing the performance of the student.

On Site Supervision

A registered supervisor is on the premises and available to the student for consultation.

Premises

The premises are defined as the area within the confines of the optical dispensary.

Dispense – as defined in Schedule 7.1 of the Health Services Restricted Activities (the objective verification of corrective lenses to the prescription) means to:

- Counsel the patient before, during and after the purchase process on the suitability of the frame, lens and contact lens selection to their prescription and their needs.
- Perform measurements for the ophthalmic appliances
- Analyze the accuracy of the finished product to the tolerance charts and the patient's requirements.
- Manipulate the position of the lenses of a subnormal vision device to ensure appropriate lens positioning for the patient.
- Alter the powers of a lens within mathematically defensible limitations.
- Alter the fit of a contact lens to fulfill the optical and physical needs of the patient.

Delivery

- Release the ophthalmic appliance to the customer/ patient as put aside by the registered optician/contact lens practitioner
- Mail the ophthalmic appliance on the instruction of the registered practitioner.

Standard 8

Each Registered Optician is responsible for complying with the code of ethics.

Standard 9

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring that all standard tolerances are met for the accuracy of ophthalmic appliances.

Standard Tolerance charts are available on the website. Current Canadian Standards always apply.

Standard 10

Each Registered Optician is responsible for ensuring proper laws are adhered to where they are employed.

A license is not required in order to own an Optical Dispensary.

A license **is** required to operate a dispensary.

When a regulated member operates a dispensary the following requirements must be met:

- that regulated member perform or supervise the performance of the restricted activity of dispensing in accordance with the regulations;
- that regulated member carry errors and omissions insurance in accordance with the regulations;
- that regulated members sign insurance and third party contract forms;
- that regulated members must not support or condone the provision of professional services by an employee who is trained and educated as an optician unless the employee is registered with the College. (It is an offense to hire an unregulated individual who should be regulated.)