

## BRIEFING NOTE

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Derick Summers, Chair, Registration Committee

**DATE:** December 1, 2025

**SUBJECT:** **Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy**  
**Appendix A:** Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy (Current & marked with changes version)  
**Appendix B:** Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy (Clean & proposed updated version)

☒ For Decision

☐ For Information

☐ Monitoring Report

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### Purpose:

To consider approval of proposed updates to the Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings policy, following a scheduled content review by the Registration Committee.

### Background:

The Registration Committee carries out a regular review of all public-facing policies to ensure they remain accurate, relevant, and aligned with the College's current processes. The following policy is being brought forward to the Board following a scheduled content review by the Committee.

The Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy was first approved on May 11, 2020. This policy replaced an earlier Policy Dealing with Convictions, Findings and Ongoing Proceedings, which had been in place since December 7, 2015.

The policy sets out a requirement for applicants with prior findings of guilt, current existing charges, or findings by other regulatory bodies to provide submissions for consideration by the Registrar and/or the Registration Committee. Since 2020, the policy also requires all applicants for a certificate as a Registered Optician to undergo a Vulnerable Sector (VS) check as part of the application process. The VS check is used by the College to confirm and verify the information that is self-disclosed by applicants pertaining to any prior findings of guilt, current existing charges or conditions, and other information that might be relevant to their suitability to practice (including record suspensions related to sexually based offences, findings of not criminally responsible due to a mental disorder, etc).

**For Consideration:**

The current policy with visible tracked changes is attached as Appendix A and the proposed clean version of the policy is attached as Appendix B so that the Board can view what edits are being proposed.

Simplified language has been proposed to make the policy easier for applicants/registrants to understand.

The information around providing false or misleading information was updated to reflect the change under the new regulation. Under the new regulation, if an applicant provides false or misleading information on their application, the applicant is subject to revocation by the Registrar. Once registered, failure by a registrant to report new information on an ongoing basis may result in a referral to the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC).

The section around Vulnerable Sector (VS) checks was updated to reflect that police services are primarily providing completed VS checks as a PDF file via email. Completed VS checks in a PDF format can be verified two ways, depending on the police force: scanning the QR code to confirm if it legitimate or clicking on the digital signature to verify.

The Registration Committee was informed that VS checks are an additional screening tool for Registered Optician (RO) applicants. If an applicant does not disclose prior charges, a VS check will catch matters that were not disclosed.

The Registration Committee reaffirmed that the rationale for requiring VS checks at registration was in the public interest.

On review, the Committee felt the proposed changes made the policy easier to understand, while maintaining the core requirements for applicants to undergo a VS check and to provide additional information in the event of charges or findings. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the Board approve the proposed changes.

**Public Interest Considerations:**

The Committee considered that the College requires the disclosure of any charges or findings and a completed VS check to carry out its duty to protect the public. If the applicant does not disclose their charges or findings during the application process, the VS check is a secondary tool to ensure it is caught. This policy allows the College to ensure that they are doing the most they can to approve professionals that have no conduct concerns.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations:**

The Committee considered that applicants may not always disclose information during application disclosure. The VS check gives the College a secondary tool to catch anything that may have been omitted or missed. It should be noted that having any existing charges or findings does not mean that applicants will be automatically denied registration. Context and details around the charge or finding will assist the Registration Committee in making a decision that will protect the public.

**Risk Management Considerations:**

The Committee considered that the proposed changes to this policy ensures that the College receives all information possible available to make an informed decision as to whether or not an individual will be able to provide safe and ethical care to the public.

**Action Required:**

That the Board approve the proposed updates to the Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings policy or order a further review.

## REGISTRATION POLICY

~~Policy on Mandatory Disclosures~~, Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy

### ~~Vulnerable Sector Checks~~

This policy outlines the following requirements for all applicants to the College of Opticians of Ontario ("College"):

1. Mandatory disclosure of current proceedings and prior findings.
2. Vulnerable Sector Requirement for Registered Optician applicants.
3. Additional information required for applicants with charges, ongoing proceedings, or findings.

### Disclosure of Current Proceedings and Prior Findings

All applicants to the College ~~of Opticians (the "College")~~ for a certificate of registration must disclose details of the following as part of the application process:

1. Any outstanding charges or findings of guilt for an offence in Canada or any jurisdiction.
2. Whether they are currently subject to any bail conditions or other restrictions that were imposed on them or agreed to by them in relation to a charge in Canada or any other jurisdiction.
3. Whether they are the subject of any ~~allegations~~current proceedings or findings of professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity by any body that regulates a profession inside or outside Ontario.
4. Whether they are the subject of any ~~allegations~~current proceedings or findings of professional negligence or malpractice in any jurisdiction.
5. Whether they have been refused registration/license by a body that regulates a profession inside or outside Ontario, including instances where the refusal is due to the applicant failing to achieve a passing mark in a licensing/registration examination.
6. Whether they are in good standing, fulfilling all requirements, with any other regulatory body with whom they are registered.
7. Any other event that would provide reasonable grounds for the belief that the applicant may lack the knowledge, skill or judgment to practice safely and professionally.

The College requires this information in order to carry out its duty to protect the public by ensuring that applicants will practice in accordance with the law, will display appropriate knowledge, skill and judgment and will provide safe and ethical care when registered as opticians.

Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy

Date Approved: May 11, 2020

Last amended date: DATE TBC

~~In addition, effective~~ The fact that an applicant may have charges, convictions, findings or ongoing proceedings does not necessarily mean that they will be refused registration. However, it does mean that the College will require the additional information referred to above before it can proceed with registering the applicant.

#### False or misleading information may result in revocation by the Registrar

An applicant who becomes registered with the College based on false or misleading statements, representations or information in their application, whether by commission or omission, is subject to revocation by the Registrar.

Once issued a certificate of registration, a registrant has an ongoing duty under the legislation to report all information concerning charges, bail conditions, ongoing proceedings, and findings of guilt.<sup>1</sup> Failure to do so may result in a referral to the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) and Discipline Committee, and possible revocation of the certificate of registration.

#### Vulnerable Sector Checks

Effective January 1, 2021, those applying for a certificate of registration as a Registered Optician must ~~also~~ provide a Vulnerable Sector ("VS") check as part of their application for registration with the College. A VS check verifies whether the applicant has a criminal record or any record suspension for sexual offences and searches local police records for information relevant to the VS check. The College uses the results of the VS check to verify some of the above noted information.

The VS check must meet the following requirements:

1. The VS check must be completed using all names currently used by the applicant, as well as any names the applicant has used in the past.
2. The full legal name, previous names (if applicable) and date of birth on the VS check must match the information provided to the College during the application process.
3. The VS check must have been conducted no more than six months prior to the date the application for registration is submitted to the College.

#### 4. The VS check must be sent to the College in its original signed format, as follows:

4-a. For VS checks received in hard copy format: The original signed document obtained from the applicant's local police service must be sent to the College by mail or courier. ~~Faxes, scans or photographs will not be accepted.~~

b. For VS checks received electronically: The original electronic copy must be sent to the College via email as a PDF attachment, and must include an electronic signature or other electronic verification of authenticity.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Professions Procedural Code, sections 85.6.1, 85.6.2, 85.6.5, and 85.6.4; Registration Regulation (O. Reg. 32/24), section 5(1).

5. The VS check must be obtained at the applicant's own expense.

In the event that an applicant is unable to obtain a VS check (for example, applicants who do not or have not resided in Canada), they must provide proof that the Registrar determines to be acceptable in the circumstances. The applicant will be required to undergo ~~an alternate~~ criminal record screening process approved by the Registrar and to submit the results in the manner and form requested by the Registrar.

~~It would be considered an act of professional misconduct for an applicant to become registered with the College based on false or misleading statements or omissions in the registration application. Such misconduct may lead to a referral to the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC), Discipline Committee, and possible revocation of the certificate of registration.~~

~~Once issued a certificate of registration, a registrant has an ongoing duty under the legislation to report all information concerning charges, bail conditions, ongoing proceedings, findings of guilt, or findings of professional misconduct, incompetence, negligence or malpractice.<sup>3</sup> Failure to do so may result in a referral to the (ICRC), Discipline Committee, and possible revocation of the certificate of registration.~~

#### **Existing Charges/Findings; Requirement to Provide Written Submission**

All applicants who have existing charges, convictions, findings or ongoing proceedings are required to provide a detailed written submission pertaining to the matter that was disclosed on their application form and/or through the VS check. The written submission should address the following, where applicable:

1. The circumstances relating to the matter that was disclosed.
2. An explanation of why the matter is not a hindrance to the applicant's ability to practice opticianry in the public interest.
3. An explanation that would demonstrate that the applicant understands their accountability as a healthcare professional.
4. Details and evidence of compliance with any court orders.
5. Details and evidence of any remediation or rehabilitation undertaken by the applicant.

Applicants may also be asked to provide additional information and/or documentation depending on the matter disclosed, which may include, but is not limited to:

1. Court documents/transcripts/reports/orders
2. Letters of reference
3. Decisions and reasons from other regulatory bodies

<sup>3</sup>Health Professions Procedural Code, sections 85.6.1, 85.6.2, 85.6.5, and 85.6.4; Registration Regulation, section 4(2)~~1~~

### Criteria and Process for the Evaluation of Existing Charges/Findings

~~The fact that an applicant may have charges, convictions, findings or ongoing proceedings does not necessarily mean that they will be refused registration. However, it does mean that the College will require the additional information referred to above before it can proceed with registering the applicant.~~

The Registrar will review applications where an applicant has charges, convictions, findings or ongoing proceedings. Each application will be considered individually. The Registrar may decide to:

1. Register the applicant;
2. Register the applicant with terms and conditions consented to by the applicant;<sup>3</sup> or
3. Refer the application to the Registration Committee for further consideration.

If the matter is referred by the Registrar to the Registration Committee, applicants will have an opportunity to make further submissions to the Registration Committee within 30 days of being notified of the referral. The Registration Committee has the authority to:

1. Direct the Registrar to register the applicant;
2. Direct the Registrar to register the applicant with terms, conditions, and limitations; or
3. Direct the Registrar to refuse to register the applicant.

In considering the application, the Registrar/Registration Committee will consider and evaluate the following factors:

1. The seriousness of the matter disclosed;
2. The date the matter occurred (i.e. period of time since the matter occurred);
3. The relevance of the matter to professional practice;
4. Whether any remedial steps have been taken by the applicant in relation to the matter and the outcome;
5. The subsequent conduct of the applicant (i.e. no further evidence of conduct issues); and
6. Any other relevant factors based on the specific circumstances of the matter.

If the Registration Committee decides to impose terms, conditions, and limitations, these may include, but are not limited to: supervision, monitoring or mentorship; counselling; additional courses or continuing education (i.e. ethics, boundaries); assessment; restrictions on practice settings, scope of practice or patient demographic.

Applicants have the right to appeal decisions of the Registration Committee to the Registration ~~Appeal~~Appeals Panel (RAP) within 15 days of receipt of the written decision, in accordance with the

<sup>3</sup> Any such agreement must be approved by the Registration Committee

Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings Policy

Date Approved: May 11, 2020

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[Registration Appeal/Appeals Panel Policy](#). After a decision of the RAP is issued, an applicant may appeal to the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB) within 30 days of receiving the decision.

#### Public Disclosure of Information

The College has an obligation under its [by-laws](#) as well as the [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#) ("O. Reg. 261/18"), to post certain information to the College's public register once an applicant becomes a registrant of the College. The information that must be posted includes the following:

1. All findings of guilt made under the *Criminal Code* (Canada) or the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (Canada) for which the conviction has not been overturned and there has been no pardon or record suspension<sup>4</sup>.
2. Any currently existing conditions of release following a charge for an offence under the *Criminal Code* (Canada) or the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (Canada) or subsequent to a finding of guilt and pending appeal, and any variations to those conditions.<sup>5</sup>
3. All outstanding charges under the *Criminal Code* (Canada) or the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (Canada).<sup>6</sup>
4. All findings by a disciplinary body, including findings of professional misconduct or incompetence, by another regulatory or licensing authority in any jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup>
5. All findings of incapacity by a body that governs a profession inside or outside Ontario.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#), sections 1(1)1 and 1(2)

<sup>5</sup> [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#), section 1(1)2

<sup>6</sup> [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#), section 1(1)3

<sup>7</sup> [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#), section 1(1)4

<sup>8</sup> [By-laws](#), section 15.6(xvi)



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3. Refer the application to the Registration Committee for further consideration.

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1. Direct the Registrar to register the applicant;
2. Direct the Registrar to register the applicant with terms, conditions, and limitations; or
3. Direct the Registrar to refuse to register the applicant.

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5. All findings of incapacity by a body that governs a profession inside or outside Ontario.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Ontario Regulation 261/18](#), section 1(1)4

<sup>7</sup> [By-laws](#), section 15.6(xvi)