

COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The College of Opticians Practice Guidelines apply to all registered opticians in Ontario, regardless of practice environment.

Guidelines describe best practices for opticians, and explain and interpret standards of practice and other responsibilities of an optician. They are a resource to help opticians understand how to make safe and ethical practice decisions.

Guidelines to Standard of Practice 3: Dispensing of Appropriate Optical Devices

Standard: The optician shall dispense optical devices appropriate to the patient.

Guidelines:

Patient Practitioner Relationship

Eyeglasses, contact lenses, and subnormal vision devices cannot be dispensed in the absence of a patient-practitioner relationship.

Using Technology

The optician must exercise professional judgment when using or considering whether to use a technology during any part of the dispensing process. This includes the preparation, adaptation and delivery of the eyewear.

Technology, including the internet and computer software, cannot substitute the judgment and oversight of an optician. Used properly, technology can be a useful tool. It can help opticians to meet their patients' needs, including by enabling opticians to communicate and interact with patients remotely, and to take more accurate measurements. However, an optician cannot allow a machine to dispense on his or her behalf. It remains the optician's responsibility to perform all dispensing steps, exercising professional judgment in the patient's best interests at all times.

Regardless of the technology used, the optician is responsible for ensuring appropriate patient care and outcomes in accordance with the standards of practice.

Preparing to take an Eyeglass Order

Before an eyeglass order is placed, an optician should ensure that he or she collects and records all relevant patient history information, reviews the details of the prescription, provides appropriate counselling, and takes accurate measurements.

Fitting and Adapting Eyeglasses

In all circumstances, a physical, in person meeting between the optician and patient is required to appropriately fit and adapt the completed eyeglasses and ensure that they are appropriate to the

patient's needs. The optician's final check of the eyeglasses on the patient's face is a necessary step before eyeglasses can be provided to the patient, and should not be performed virtually.

Dispensing Contact Lenses

In the case of contact lenses, a physical, in person meeting between the optician and patient is necessary during initial selection and fitting 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.

If the patient previously wore contact lenses, the following details (if known) should be recorded in the patient record at the optician's initial meeting with the patient: 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.

Low Vision Assessments

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, management 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.

Guidelines to Standard of Practice 5: Record Keeping

Standard: An optician must retain complete and accurate patient records.

Guidelines:

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

The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) website provides many additional resources to assist health professionals to understand their record keeping obligations under PHIPA (www.ipc.on.ca). This includes the following information bulletins:

- Fact Sheet No. 1: Safeguarding Personal Health Information
- Fact Sheet No. 10: Secure Destruction of Personal Information
- Fact Sheet No. 11: Health Information Custodians Working for Non-Health Information Custodians

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.

Guidelines to Standard of Practice 6: Patient Relations

Standard: 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.

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, 2004*.

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.