



# NSCDO

Nova Scotia College of  
DISPENSING OPTICIANS

## STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians

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## INTRODUCTION

Opticians and contact lens practitioners in Nova Scotia are regulated health professionals under the [Dispensing Opticians Act](#) and must be registered and licensed with the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians (NSCDO) in order to provide opticianry services to the public. All members of the NSCDO must meet competency-based educational requirements and pass examinations related to dispensing of vision appliances. Licensing criteria also require opticians and contact lens practitioners to keep their knowledge and skills current through continuing education.

These Standards of Practice apply to all registered opticians and contact lens practitioners in Nova Scotia, regardless of the environment in which they practice. In addition to complying with these Standards, Members in the practice of Opticianry are required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with all other relevant governance documents, including the [Dispensing Opticians Act](#), the [Dispensing Opticians Regulations](#), the [Dispensing Opticians By-Laws](#), and the [NSCDO Code of Ethics](#).

## NSCDO MANDATE

The NSCDO's mandate is to serve and protect the public interest in the practice of optical dispensing, by regulating the practice through registration, licensing, and a professional conduct process. The NSCDO is required under its statute to establish, maintain and develop standards of professional practice and standards as well as standards of professional ethics. By engaging in these activities, the NSCDO provides assurance to the public that practising opticians have the knowledge, skill, proficiency, and competency to engage in the practice of Opticianry.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NSCDO STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

To protect the public, the NSCDO Standards of Practice serve the following purpose:

1. The Standards of Practice establish a standard of professional conduct, competency, education, and proficiency that is to be maintained by all members of the College, including governing the manner and the method of the member's practice.
2. The Standards of Practice also provide the NSCDO with benchmarks against which it can determine a member's conduct while investigating complaints.
3. They provide the public with a clear understanding of the quality of care they should expect to receive from an optician in the practice of opticianry.
4. They are mandatory requirements and an obligation that all opticians must meet. It is professional misconduct to breach or fail to meet a Standard of Practice.

The Standards are not a step-by-step guide on how to practice opticianry. Instead, the Standards set out expectations for every optician. A core expectation is that opticians use their professional judgment to make appropriate decisions in providing care to patients. When dispensing a vision appliance, an optician must take full responsibility for meeting these standards and ensuring that the patient's best interests are met.

## Standards of Practice Overview

**Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice** – The optician ensures that every aspect of service delivery is centred around the patient's immediate and ongoing visual needs.

**Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice** – The optician applies verifiable evidence, critical thinking, and professional judgment to all aspects of service delivery.

**Standard 3: Collaborative Care** – The optician pursues and supports the development of inter- and intra-professional relationships and engages in ongoing collaboration with relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff to promote optimal patient outcomes.

**Standard 4: Competence** – The optician develops and maintains competence to best serve patients and protect the public.

**Standard 5: Professionalism** – The optician meets the ethical and legal requirements of professional practice and honours patient boundaries.

**Standard 6: Safety & Infection Control** – The optician takes reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and transmission of infectious agents within their professional practice and practice environment to ensure the health and safety of patients, other regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff.

**Standard 7: Dispensing of Vision Appliances** – The optician only dispenses vision appliances that are appropriate for the patient.

**Standard 8: Independent Automated Refraction** – The optician obtains the applicable certification from NSCDO before performing independent automated refractions and adheres to the mandated criteria.

**Standard 9: Delegation & Supervision** – The optician is responsible and accountable for the opticianry services provided by students or restricted licensed members working under their supervision or to whom they have delegated tasks.

**Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality** – The optician always respects the patients' rights to privacy and confidentiality of their personal and health information and always complies with applicable legislation.

**Standard 11: Conflict of Interest** – The optician recognizes, prevents, and takes action to resolve direct, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

**Standard 12: Remote Practice & Technology** – The optician shall ensure that technology is integrated into the opticianry practice where appropriate and that it assists the remote services provided and is done in a manner that serves the patient's best interest.

**Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing** - The optician maintains accurate, complete, and timely patient and financial records in accordance with the Dispensing Opticians Act, Bylaws, and applicable legislative and regulatory requirements.

**Standard 14: Communication & Marketing** - The optician communicates clearly, truthfully, and respectfully in any context that patient care may be impacted and adheres to NSCDO regulations in advertising and marketing their practice.

**Standard 15: Risk Management & Quality Improvement** - The optician engages in quality improvement and risk management activities to ensure patient safety and well-being.

# Standard 1: Patient-Centred Care

## Description

The optician integrates a patient-centred approach in all aspects of service delivery.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that they will be treated by an optician who continually demonstrates professional integrity and that their input will be valued, acknowledged, and integrated into all aspects of service delivery.

## Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 4: Competence
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

## Criteria

- 1.1 Ensure that your conduct towards all patients is fair, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and non-discriminatory.
- 1.2 Ensure any service or product that is recommended to the patient meets their needs.
- 1.3 Collect subjective and objective information to facilitate the patient's immediate and ongoing care.
- 1.4 Consider the relative importance or urgency of patient complaints to inform the development of recommendations, service plan, and/or referral, where appropriate.
- 1.5 Develop a service plan in collaboration with the patient, following education and explanation of the recommended service or product.
- 1.6 Ensure the patient understands the scope of services provided or recommended to ensure that they are providing informed consent.
- 1.7 Obtain the patient's informed consent for the initiation and continuation of any services.
- 1.8 Produce a record that lists the patient's services received and any follow-up inquiries in a clear manner.
- 1.9 Be responsible for inspecting any product and determining the appropriateness of any solution provided to a patient.
- 1.10 Provide verbal, written, or electronic information concerning any instructions or recommended follow-up to the patient.
- 1.11 Advise the patient when their fit, visual acuity and vision health should be next evaluated during their contact lens assessment.
- 1.12 Record any patient follow-up information in the patient's record to maintain an appropriate perspective on the patient's ongoing care.
- 1.13 Be available to the patient or take reasonable steps to ensure continuity of care for the patient.

## Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice

### Description

The optician demonstrates evidence-informed practice in all aspects of service delivery. Evidence-informed practice is the ongoing process in our profession that uses evidence from research and other resources, expertise, and patient preferences to guide practice-based decisions that best serve the patient.

### Expected Outcome

Patients can expect the optical services they receive from the optician:

1. Are based on relevant clinical research and professional experience and knowledge; and
2. Take into consideration the patient's circumstances and requirements.

### Criteria

- 2.1 Review various reliable sources of evidence and adapt practice considering new evidence when appropriate.
- 2.2 Exercise critical thinking while identifying, interpreting, and applying evidence to practice.
- 2.3 Integrate good professional judgment into patient-centred care, evaluate practice regarding patient outcomes and available evidence, and modify approaches accordingly.
- 2.4 Share and exchange verifiable evidence with other opticians, regulated health care professionals, students, unregulated staff, and patients to provide relevant care.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 4: Competence
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

# Standard 3: Collaborative Care

## Description

The optician supports the development of inter- and intra-professional relationships and engages in ongoing collaboration with relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff, who play a role in providing assistive, safe, and ethical services to patients for optimal patient outcomes.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 4: Competence
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect high-quality care based on inter-professional collaboration that allows opticians, relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff to choose the approach that best serves their patients.

## Criteria

- 3.1 Communicate effectively with patients, team members, relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff to facilitate collaboration, coordinate care, and provide collaborative assessment, as required.
- 3.2 Recognize the need to refer the patient to relevant regulated healthcare professionals for assessment and/or treatment when the patient presents with a condition requiring evaluation or treatment considered to be outside the optician's scope of practice, competence and/or comfort.
- 3.3 Recommend a suitable professional to the patient when required and discuss the recommendation with the patient.
- 3.4 Clearly document recommendations made to the patient in the patient record.
- 3.5 Clearly document any communications between health care providers, as part of a patient referral, in the patient record.
- 3.6 Ensure an information-sharing agreement is in place in a collaborative practice. The optician is the custodian of the eyeglass records completed by the optician. The licensed contact lens practitioner is the custodian of the contact lens records completed by the contact lens practitioner.
- 3.7 Obtain informed consent and maintain confidentiality with patients, relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff always.

# Standard 4: Competence

## Description

The optician shall develop and maintain competence to best serve patients and protect the public.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect the optician to be competent in all areas of practice for which care is provided. Patients can expect that the optician maintains the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience to deliver quality care.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 15: Risk Management & Quality Improvement

## Criteria

- 4.1 Be responsible for maintaining professional competence.
- 4.2 Maintain current knowledge of legislation, regulations, standards, policies, and third-party agreements pertaining to the delivery of opticianry care and the patient's education and general well-being.
- 4.3 Actively engage in self-reflection to identify competency gaps and learning needs.
- 4.4 Participate in NACOR accredited or NSCDO pre-approved continuing education seminars/webinars to fulfill the NSCDO mandatory continuing education requirements.
- 4.5 Develop and maintain knowledge and competence in emerging and existing areas of practice.
- 4.6 Only perform tasks in which the optician has sufficient education, experience, and capacity to do so and has maintained the necessary skills, knowledge, and judgment to perform competently and safely.
- 4.7 Refer to another optician or regulated health care professional or assist patients in finding the necessary professional help in situations where the optician does not have sufficient competence to deliver quality care.
- 4.8 Do not engage in the practice of opticianry while the optician's ability to do so is compromised or impaired.



# Standard 5: Professionalism

## Description

The optician shall meet the profession's ethical and legal requirements and honour patient boundaries.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 4: Competence
- Standard 11: Conflict of Interest

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that the optician provides services in compliance with ethical and legal requirements applicable to their practice, and receives respectful treatment in all interactions.

## Criteria

- 5.1 Function in accordance with the governance documents of the profession including the: [Dispensing Opticians Act](#), the [Dispensing Opticians Regulations](#), the [Dispensing Opticians By-Laws](#), the [NSCDO Code of Ethics](#), and these Standards of Practice.
- 5.2 Ensure professional standards are applied to all products dispensed.
- 5.3 Act in a manner consistent with [The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act](#) and respect the dignity and rights of the patient.
- 5.4 Act in a manner consistent with the [Accessible Canada Act](#).
- 5.5 Act in accordance with applicable employment legislation, including [The Nova Scotia Labour Standards](#).
- 5.6 Display your issued NSCDO optician/contact lens practitioner licence in a place and manner conspicuous to the public.
- 5.7 Report any incident of unauthorized practice to the NSCDO.
- 5.8 Report any incident of unauthorized use of the protected titles to the NSCDO.
- 5.9 Report unethical, unsafe, or incompetent practice by any regulated health care professional to the appropriate College, in accordance with applicable legislative requirements.
- 5.10 Report any sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse by any regulated health care professional to the appropriate College in accordance with applicable legislative requirements.
- 5.11 Only provide treatment the optician knows or determines to be appropriate to meet the patient's needs.
- 5.12 Only continue treatment of a patient where such need is indicated and where the treatment continues to be effective.
- 5.13 Render opticianry services to all patients with equal diligence, respect and without discrimination.

- 5.14 Be responsible for the professional actions and consequences of actions of any student under supervision.
- 5.15 Maintain appropriate boundaries with patients.
- 5.16 Do not engage in sexual relationships with patients.

# Standard 6: Safety & Infection Control

## Description

The optician takes reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and transmission of infectious agents within their professional practice and practice environment to ensure health and safety for patients and staff, other regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice
- Standard 15: Risk Management & Quality Improvement

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect the optician has determined and implemented methods of infection control to sterilize or sanitize all products and instruments used in patient care.

## Criteria

- 6.1 Adhere to all federal, provincial and municipal requirements, including health and safety, as per the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#) and [Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia](#) and ensure the practice environment is compliant.
- 6.2 Stay up to date on current techniques used to disinfect the dispensary and control the transmission of infectious agents.
- 6.3 Take reasonable and appropriate measures to minimize the risk of contamination and subsequent transmission of infectious agents within their dispensing facility to assure health and safety for both patients and staff.
- 6.4 Have access to hot and cold running water, or as in the case of a mobile facility, some alternative options for hand hygiene in the practice environment.
- 6.5 Devise and/or follow a protocol that outlines frequency and specific responsibility for disinfection of the practice and instrumentation, as well as frame sanitization, as these items will have shared contact by patients. Best Practice - Regularly clean and/or sanitize eyewear at the optician's discretion.
- 6.6 Follow routine precautions at all times (e.g., hand hygiene and appropriate waste disposal).
- 6.7 Take reasonable steps to ensure that workplace safety protocols are followed.
- 6.8 Take reasonable steps to identify and mitigate risk factors for eye infections.

# Standard 7: Dispensing of Vision Appliances

## Description

The optician or contact lens practitioner only dispenses optical appliances appropriate to the patient.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that an optician delivers optical services competent in all areas of practice for which care is provided. Patients can expect that the optician maintains the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience to deliver quality care.

## Criteria

- 7.1 Opticians shall own, be employed in, or have access to a practice environment that meets the requirements outlined in the Standards of Practice to provide services.
- 7.2 Opticians employed by a dispensary will be held accountable for all vision appliances sold, dispensed or adjusted from that dispensary.
- 7.3 The optician's or contact lens practitioner's licence must be prominently displayed and clearly visible to the public in their practice environment.
- 7.4 Provide the NSCDO with current details about the practice environment where the optician's dispensing services take place, including the mailing address, telephone number, and electronic mail address.
- 7.5 Have access to the ophthalmic instrumentation necessary for the level of services offered in the practice environment.
- 7.6 Dispense vision appliances based on the prescription of an optometrist, ophthalmologist, or other legally qualified prescriber which contain:
  - a. The name and signature of a prescriber (if using a prescription) or the name and licence number of the optician who performed the refraction (if using an assessment record).
  - b. The patient's name.
  - c. The patient's prescription
  - d. The date of examination/assessment.
- 7.7 The optician must inform the patient of the importance of regular eye examinations for the maintenance of eye health and the risks associated with failing to do so.
- 7.8 Retain a copy of the original prescription as part of the patient's record. The optician shall make available the original or a copy of the current prescription on file when

## Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communications & Marketing

requested. If the patient requests a copy of an expired prescription, the patient should be directed to receive this from the original prescriber.

- 7.9 When duplicating the patient's current prescription, note the duplication in the patient record. Advise the patient of the risk associated with glasses duplication (accumulative variances that could cause visual problems for the patient). It is always best practice to dispense glasses based on a valid Rx by a valid prescribing doctor.
- 7.10 Analyze a patient's optical requirements in conjunction with a prescription or assessment record to recommend an appropriate vision appliance.
- 7.11 Assist the patient in selecting appropriate vision appliances.

## Eyeglasses

At least one licensed optician must be always on the premises when eyeglasses are being dispensed or adjusted.

- 7.11 Review the patient's environment, occupation, hobbies, regular activities and/or physical factors when recommending ophthalmic lenses and frames.
- 7.12 Take the patient's measurements as appropriate to ensure the proper function of their eyeglasses.
- 7.13 Verify the accuracy of the patient's completed eyeglasses to ensure they are as ordered and within tolerance. Refer to the most recent version of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for Ophthalmics – Prescription Ophthalmic Lenses Recommendations for tolerance chart information.
- 7.14 Fit and adjust the eyeglasses to meet the patient's needs, making recommendations to allow for successful adaptation to eyeglasses based on the patient's visual expectations and work environments.
- 7.15 Record in the patient file the services received by, and products dispensed to the patient, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Lens type.
  - b. Frame details (make, model, colour, size).
  - c. Measurements, including pupillary distance, segment, or ocular center heights.
  - d. Which, if any, components of the dispensed product(s) (e.g., lenses, frames) were brought into the practice environment by the client, having been obtained or purchased separately.

- 7.16 Educate the patient on aspects of eyeglass wear, including, but not limited to, the use, expectations, limitations, adaptation period, and maintenance requirements of the eyeglasses.
- 7.17 If the eyeglasses are to be used as safety eyeglasses, adhere to safety standards and tolerances for personal protective eyewear.

## Contact Lenses

Only a licensed contact lens practitioner can fit, dispense, or adjust contact lenses.

- 7.18 Record patient history and determine the suitability of the patient for contact lens wear by performing, but not limited to:
  - a. A detailed biomicroscopic assessment of the cornea, conjunctiva and lids, and the tear layer.
  - b. Corneal curvature.
  - c. Any relevant medications.
  - d. Other relevant factors including the patient's environment, work, hobbies, daily activities, and patient history.
- 7.19 Educate the patient about the advantages, risks, and limitations of contact lens wear.
- 7.20 Recommend the most appropriate type of contact lens to the patient based on the information gathered.
- 7.21 Apply the patient's refractive error, visual requirements, and other factors to determine the contact lens specifications.
- 7.22 Evaluate trial contact lenses on the patient for physical fit and best-corrected visual acuity and make modifications as required.
  - a. Verify the accuracy and/or acceptable tolerance of the contact lenses ordered for the patient.
  - b. Instruct the patient and record any relevant details or recommendations to the patient with respect to:
    - i. Lens hygiene.
    - ii. Lens insertion and removal.
    - iii. Lens care.
    - iv. Wear time and replacement schedules.
    - v. Adaptive symptoms.
    - vi. Contraindications to use.
    - vii. Follow-up schedules.
    - viii. How and when to access emergency care.
- 7.23 Develop and provide an ongoing patient follow-up plan.
- 7.24 Conduct proper follow-up assessments after initial fittings, no matter the modality of the contact lens provided, to ensure that the fit of the lens and best-corrected visual acuity has been maintained throughout the contact lens trial period. Also, to ensure that

corneal health and integrity have also been maintained during the trial period before a final supply of contact lenses can be dispensed.

- 7.25 After the patient has completed a successful follow-up assessment(s), consider a contact lens fitting complete, and the specifications as recommended are accurate.
- 7.26 Provide an initial fitting to a patient seeking replacement contact lenses who is not an established contact lens patient, properly documenting necessary information in a new patient file.
- 7.27 Release a contact lens record containing the updated specifications after completion of service as requested by the patient.
- 7.28 When providing replacement contact lens services for an established contact lens patient:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Determine the need for alterations to previous lens specifications and adjust accordingly.
  - c. Advise the patient of the need for and extent of continuing care.
  - d. Confirm the parameters of contact lenses ordered.
  - e. Provide follow-up services in accordance with the service plan.
  - f. Provide the patient with a new contact lens record containing the updated specifications after completion of service.
- 7.29 If a patient seeking replacement contact lenses, who is not an established patient, provides a contact lens record, then contact lenses may be dispensed if the contact lens practitioner:
  - a. Uses professional judgment to determine risks related to providing replacement contact lenses without an initial fitting and communicate this to the patient;
  - b. Produces and maintains a patient record appropriate for the service, including retaining a copy of the contact lens record provided by the patient; and document the reasons for providing replacement lenses without an initial fitting in the patient record.
  - c. Best recommended practice for the protection of the patient should be, at a minimum, to perform an assessment of the fit and best-corrected visual acuity of the contact lenses before dispensing a supply to the patient. For the fitting and dispensing of specialty contacts, including but not limited to RGP, scleral, ortho-K, etc., tolerances must be followed according to the latest ANSI standards for contact lenses. Refer the patient to another licensed professional if the competence or experience to perform specialty contact lens fittings and assessments is inadequate to best serve the patient's needs or safety.

## Low Vision Devices

- 7.30 Demonstrate and recommend low vision devices suited to the patient's visual requirements and functional needs.
- 7.31 Instruct the patient on the use of the low vision device.
- 7.32 Evaluate and monitor the success of the low vision device and recommend additional or alternative devices, as necessary.
- 7.33 Refer or assist patients in finding the necessary professional help when the condition or status of the patient falls outside of their scope of practice, education, or experience.



# Standard 8: Independent Automated Refraction

## Description

The optician obtains the applicable certification from NSCDO before performing independent automated refractions and adheres to the mandated criteria.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communications & Marketing

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that independent automated refraction services will be provided by an optician who is trained and certified to perform independent automated refractions safely and effectively.

## Criteria

- 8.1 Be certified by NSCDO to conduct independent automated refractions.
- 8.2 Comply with the regulations of the profession in Nova Scotia when conducting independent automated refractions.
- 8.3 Have access to the appropriate equipment to perform independent automated refractions, including one or more computerized components.
- 8.4 Before conducting an independent automated refraction, work with the patient to complete the patient notice forms required by the bylaws and obtain informed consent.
- 8.5 Document any referral or request to provide an independent automated refraction from a prescriber in the patient record.
- 8.6 Communicate the fee for the independent automated refraction to the patient prior to providing the service.
- 8.7 Ensure that all assessment records generated for use in preparing vision appliances are signed by an optician who is certified to perform independent automated refractions and retained in the patient record.
- 8.8 Recommend that the patient see a relevant regulated health care professional regarding any indications or complications in the patient's visual or general health as observed during the independent automated refraction.
- 8.10 Maintain the patient record in accordance with Standard 13 and the regulations of the profession in Nova Scotia.

# Standard 9: Delegation & Supervision

## Description

The optician is responsible and accountable for the opticianry services provided by students or restricted licensed members working under their supervision or to whom they have delegated tasks.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that they are informed of the role of the supervised personnel and made aware that the services provided by these personnel are supervised or delegated by the optician.

## Criteria

- 9.1 Delegate unrestricted activities to unregulated staff and provide direction, as necessary.
- 9.2 Communicate with the patient about the roles, responsibilities, and reserved titles of the different personnel in the practice environment.
- 9.3 Ensure that any individual using the title of a regulated health care professional is licensed to do so.
- 9.4 When supervising or delegating tasks to a student or unregulated staff member, maintain responsibility for that individual's professional actions and the consequences of those actions.
- 9.5 Assess the knowledge and skills of unregulated staff and assign only those tasks and activities that fall within their competence.
- 9.6 Adhere to all signed supervision agreements.
- 9.7 Employ supervision and delegation strategies to determine which patients can receive services from students and unregulated staff, considering the competence of the student or unregulated staff member, the patient care needs, and any other applicable factors related to the practice environment.
- 9.8 Regularly monitor the delivery and documentation of services by students and unregulated staff to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.
- 9.9 As a contact lens fitter, supervise contact lens fittings conducted by personnel who are not contact lens fitters, as required by the regulations of the profession in Nova Scotia.

## Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communications & Marketing

- 9.10 Ensure independent automated refractions are performed only by opticians who are certified with NSCDO to perform independent automated refractions.

# Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality

## Description

The optician respects the patient's rights to privacy and confidentiality of their personal and health information and always complies with applicable legislation.

## Expected Outcome

Patients can expect that their optician safeguards their personal and health information and protects their privacy and confidentiality as required by relevant legislation.

## Criteria

- 10.1 Adhere to all relevant privacy and confidentiality legislation and regulatory requirements, including the [Personal Health Information Act](#).
- 10.2 Perform services in a manner with consideration of a patient's privacy and confidentiality.
- 10.3 Conduct assessments, treatments, conversations, and consultations in a manner that preserves patient confidentiality and privacy.
- 10.4 Store, transfer, and dispose of patient records in a manner that protects patient confidentiality, except in circumstances specified by law.
- 10.5 Obtain patient consent prior to collecting, using, and/or disclosing confidential information to parties outside of the patient's circle of care, except in circumstances specified by law.
- 10.6 Only collect information that is necessary for the services that are being provided.
- 10.7 The information in the patient records belongs to the patient; an optician is only the custodian of these records.
- 10.8 Establish and follow a written agreement to establish ownership of records in a collaborative practice with other opticians, contact lens practitioners, or other regulated health care providers.
- 10.9 Collect only personal health information that is necessary for the circumstances.
- 10.10 Ensure that patient personal health information is accurate, complete, and up to date.
- 10.11 Report privacy breaches to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to ensure the optician manages and mitigates the risk of a privacy breach.

## Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 7: Dispensing Vision Appliances
- Standard 8: Independent Automated Refraction
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 15: Risk Management & Quality Improvement

# Standard 11: Conflict of Interest

## Description

The optician recognizes, prevents, and takes action to resolve direct, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that the optician will deliver services in the patient's best interest and that conflicts of interest will be disclosed and managed.

## Criteria

- 11.1 Ensure financial and commercial interests do not compromise patient safety or vision care needs.
- 11.2 Avoid, where possible - and manage, where necessary - any situations of direct, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that are not in the patient's best interest.
- 11.3 Do not accept financial or other benefits or gifts that may be seen as affecting patient care, professional judgment, and/or trust in the profession.
- 11.4 Take steps to appropriately initiate, maintain and terminate optician-patient care relationships throughout the course of care.
- 11.5 If unavoidable, manage and provide full disclosure of the conflict of interest to patients and others, as appropriate, and document how the conflict was addressed in a complete, open, and timely manner.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality

## Standard 12: Remote Practice & Technology

### Description

The optician shall ensure that technology is integrated into the opticianry practice where appropriate and that it assists the remote services provided and done in a manner that serves the patient's best interest.

### Expected Outcome

Patients can expect that the optician's use of technology in their care does not negatively impact their safety or the quality of care they receive.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality
- Standard 13: Record Keeping
- Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

### Criteria

- 12.1 Evaluate developments in clinical theory, opticianry techniques, and technology for clinical practice and apply and adapt as appropriate.
- 12.2 Only engage in remote practice, including remote communication, dispensing, and/or delivery of prescription vision appliances where it is in the patient's best interest.
- 12.3 Ensure all patient information is collected, recorded, stored, and transmitted in a private manner.
- 12.4 Manage all patient information in compliance with the NSCDO's Standards of Practice and applicable privacy and anti-spam legislation.
- 12.5 Ensure any website or technology interface being used as part of remote opticianry practice:
  - a. Complies with the College's Advertising Policy and regulations.
  - b. Provides reasonable and timely access to an optician.
  - c. Identifies the full name and licence number of any optician who interacts with a patient through the interface.
  - d. Complies with applicable standards of practice (i.e., Standard 11, Standard 13).
  - e. Is in line with other relevant legislated requirements.

# Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing

## Description

The optician maintains accurate, complete, and timely patient and financial records in accordance with the regulations of the profession in Nova Scotia.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that health and financial records kept by the optician are accurate, understandable, complete, secure, and confidential, and will be provided or transferred at the patient's request.

## Criteria

### Record Keeping and Retention and Disposal

- 13.1 Create and maintain an accurate and truthful patient record for each patient that contains the results of measurements and observations appropriate for the services provided.
- 13.2 Ensure that all records are truthful, accurate, and updated to reflect new information after it becomes available.
- 13.3 Organize and maintain records to facilitate retrieval and review of patient information in a timely manner.
- 13.4 Comply with all privacy legislation and standards and policies related to the collection, access, and disclosure of records, and the retention and disposal of patient files.
- 13.5 Ensure records are legible and understandable by the optician, patient, NSCDO, and other regulated health care professionals.
- 13.6 Maintain patient records in a manner that provides for the security of the record, and enables timely access, as required, by the patient or authorized NSCDO representatives.
- 13.7 Provide patients with reasonable access to the information maintained about them in the health record.
- 13.8 Facilitate the timely transfer of a patient record, to another regulated health care professional, at the patient's request in accordance with relevant legislation.
- 13.9 Ensure that electronic records are kept in accordance with all record-keeping standards of practice, policies, and applicable privacy legislation, including:
  - a. Securely retaining a copy (e.g., scan) of the prescription.
  - b. Securely retaining copies of other records (e.g., dispensing notes, work orders, vision appliance specifications, and other services provided).

### Related Standards of Practice

Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice

Standard 3: Collaborative Care

Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality

Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

- c. Ensuring adequate and timely patient access, reliable backup, privacy, and encryption.
  - d. Enabling amendments and corrections that do not obliterate the original record.
- 13.10 Patient records must be retained as follows:
- a. Seven years after an adult patient was last seen.
  - b. Seven years after a child turns the legal age of majority.
- 13.11 After the retention period set out in 13.10, if the records are to be destroyed, do so in a secure manner that will protect any personal or health information.
- 13.12 Notify the NSCDO when the optician retires, sells their practice, or closes their practice for an extended period and ensure that files are not abandoned and are securely transferred in a secure location.
- 13.13 In the case of an extended closure, take reasonable steps to ensure that a patient can access their files during the closure.
- 13.14 In the absence of a written agreement to the contrary that has been signed by both parties, maintain the client record in the practice where the record was created.

## Billing

- 13.13 Understand professional fee structures and review and adhere to agreements with third-party contracts.
- 13.14 Keep clear and legible financial records pertaining to each service provided and any dispensed vision appliance, including:
- a. fees for services;
  - b. product receipts;
  - c. commercial laboratory work orders;
  - d. invoices to patients and records of payment.
- 13.15 Only opticians can sign insurance forms or submit insurance claims on behalf of the patient to assist a patient in ethically using their medical benefits.
- 13.16 Opticians or optical dispensaries may charge a suitable fee to the patient in return for conducting an inter-pupillary distance service if it is not performed as part of an independent automated refraction. In doing so, it is best practice to have the patient sign a disclaimer form stating that the optician will not be held responsible for any discrepancies occurring from optical appliances received from any third-party suppliers.
- 13.17 Do not provide an incomplete contact lens record or assessment record when a client has not paid or completed their service.
- 13.18 Charge a reasonable fee to the patient for providing a duplicate copy of the specification.



# Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

## Description

The optician communicates clearly, truthfully, and respectfully in any context that patient care may be impacted and adheres to the NSCDO's marketing and advertising bylaw when marketing and advertising their practice.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect professional, transparent, and respectful communication that promotes their understanding of proposed services, and that the optician's communications, advertising, and marketing activities are in the public interest.

## Criteria

- 14.1 Communicate effectively, using respectful, transparent, professional and straightforward language in all forms of communication addressing patient care or the profession (verbal, written, online, and social media).
- 14.2 Communicate effectively with patients to promote their understanding of proposed services through active listening, use of plain language, and encouraging questions.
- 14.3 Identify potential barriers to communication and address those barriers using various tools and techniques, such as interpreters, technology, and visual educational materials, among others.
- 14.4 Communicate with patients to outline the risks and benefits of services and facilitate an understanding of the services being delivered.
- 14.5 Explain company policies, fees, and billing, including policies on returns and discounts and expected care plans to patients in advance of provision of services to ensure that patients can make informed decisions.
- 14.6 Ensure that public communications and advertising through social media or other public forums are not false or misleading, illegitimate, unverifiable, or misrepresent the optician's expertise.
- 14.7 The designations that may be placed after a member's name, depending on the licence held, are Optician-DO and Contact Lens Fitter – CCLF. Using any other optical term, title or designation, licence, or diploma that the College does not recognize could be confusing or misleading to the public and may also result in being considered professional misconduct.
- 14.8 In all public communications, ensure such communications are compatible with the best interest of the public and upholds the reputation of the profession.

### Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 10: Privacy & Confidentiality
- Standard 13: Record Keeping & Billing

# Standard 15: Risk Management & Quality Improvement

## Description

The optician engages in quality improvement and risk management activities to ensure patient safety and well-being.

## Expected Outcome

The patient can expect that quality improvement activities are an integral component of their optician's practice and that all efforts to minimize risk will be taken to ensure quality care.

## Criteria

- 15.1 Collect feedback from patients and colleagues and engage in self-reflection to identify potential areas for quality improvement.
- 15.2 Incorporate policies and procedures into practice related to quality improvement and risk management and ensure that the optician and relevant personnel are well informed about these procedures.
- 15.3 Incorporate ongoing risk assessments and mitigation and management strategies into the practice.
- 15.4 Participate in emergency preparedness and response training appropriate to the practice setting (e.g., fire drills, CPR).
- 15.5 Assess near misses, adverse events, and service gaps and take immediate action to facilitate safe, patient-centred care and continuous quality improvement.
- 15.6 Document patient complaints and adverse events and disclose details to the patient promptly and transparently.
- 15.7 Assess client complaints, adverse events, and service gaps, and take immediate action to facilitate safe, client-centred care and continuous quality improvement.
- 15.8 Support the development of new evidence and best practices by participating in clinical research and program evaluation, as appropriate.

## Related Standards of Practice

- Standard 1: Patient-Centred Practice
- Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice
- Standard 3: Collaborative Care
- Standard 4: Competence
- Standard 5: Professionalism
- Standard 6: Safety & Infection Control
- Standard 13 Record Keeping & Billing
- Standard 14: Communication & Marketing

## Glossary of Terms

**Conflict of Interest** – Any circumstance in which your personal interests; the interests of a close friend, family member, business associate, corporation or partnership in which you hold a significant interest; the interests of a person to whom you owe an obligation; or the interests of an organization of which you are a member or with which you have any other affiliation could influence your decisions and impair your ability to act in a patient's best interests, impartially and without bias.

**Contact lens** – ocular prosthetic devices placed on the ocular surface of the eye, used to correct refractive errors or for cosmetic or therapeutic reasons.

**Contact lens practitioner** – a dual licensed member authorized under the [Dispensing Opticians Act](#) and [Dispensing Opticians Regulations](#) to fit and dispense contact lenses.

**Contact lens record** – A record of contact lens specifications derived from a contact lens fitting using information contained in an authorizing document and prepared by a contact lens practitioner or an individual with equivalent qualifications in another province or foreign jurisdiction.

**Dispense** – To design, prepare, fit, adjust, verify, or supply.

**Opticianry** –The health profession in which the following services are provided:

- a. Dispensing of vision appliances through:
  - i. The use of information contained in prescriptions and patient records.
  - ii. The duplication of corrective eyeglass lenses, with no change in refractive value, using a lensometer or similar device.
- b. Promotion of eye health and proper use of vision appliances.

**Practice environment** – A location in which an optician performs opticianry duties, including mobile services.

**Prescriber** – An optometrist, ophthalmologist or other qualified individual who produces an optical prescription or contact lens record based on an assessment that includes an eye health exam.

**Prescription** – A written record of:

- a. The power of a lens necessary to correct the refractive error of a patient's eye.
- b. The reading adds, prisms and back vertex distance.
- c. Including the prescriber's name, license number, signature, date of examination, expiry, and location of examination.

**Records** – A patient file that includes any documented patient information gathered from the complete performance of any and all opticianry services provided to the patient, including, but not limited to: patient identifying information such as name, date of birth, address, phone numbers, Nova Scotia Health number; insurance or third party billing, consent disclosures, date of visit(s) and services provided, lab orders, worksheet, invoices, records of communication, assessment charts, etc.

**Remote opticianry practice** – The performance of any dispensing activity without an in-person meeting, performed by a licensed optician/contact lens practitioner, can be done by telephone, email, video conference, etc.

**Restricted licensed member** – A member who has passed their accredited optical training program and is waiting to write the NACOR National Eyeglass or Contact Lens Examination; or a non-practicing member returning to active practice working under supervision for a specified length of time.

**Service plan** – A plan created to ensure that a patient has appropriate and continuous vision care.

**Student** – a student member, registered with the College, enrolled in an accredited optical sciences eyeglass program working under the supervision of a licensed practicing member, optometrist, or ophthalmologist.

**Student contact lens practitioner**- A practicing member registered with the College as a student contact lens practitioner, enrolled in an accredited optical science contact lens program working under the supervision of a licensed contact lens practitioner, optometrist, or ophthalmologist.

**Supervision** –

- a. Direct supervision – The supervisor is directly observing and analyzing the student's performance during their accredited optical training program.
- b. On-site supervision – The supervisor is on the premises and available to the restricted licensed member or student for consultation.

**Unregulated staff** – Employees who are not registered and licensed with the NSCDO as opticians/contact lens practitioners and restricted members.

**Verify** – To inspect and confirm before supplying a product to a patient that the following specifications are met:

- a. In the case of corrective eyeglass lenses, the specifications set out in the authorizing document provided by the patient or provided by another individual on behalf of the patient.

- b. In the case of contact lenses, the specifications set out in the contact lens record or authorizing document provided by the patient or provided by another individual on behalf of the patient.

**Vision Appliance** – An appliance or device designated or offered for a vision condition, including a corrective eyeglass lens, contact lens, or low vision aid (but excluding complete ready-to-wear eyeglasses not designated or offered for patient use).