

Dispensing Restricted Activity Standards

An optician is accountable and responsible for appropriately **dispensing**¹ optical devices to a **patient**. Dispensing is performed by opticians who have the knowledge and skills to do so and is done in accordance with these standards.

Patient Expectations

The patient can expect that optical appliances (including, but not limited to, prescription eyeglasses, prescription contact lenses, **low vision devices**, or anything prescribed by an authorized prescriber) dispensed by an optician are done so in the best interest of the patient using opticianry knowledge, skills and judgment, best practices, and in accordance with the standards in an ethical manner.

Background

The *Health Profession Restricted Activity Regulation* (2023) authorizes that opticians regulated by the College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) registered on the general register, provisional register or courtesy register, in the practice of opticianry, may dispense corrective lenses.

Regulated Member² Requirements

1. An optician is accountable and responsible to ensure they have a valid prescription from a person authorized to prescribe corrective lenses in order to fabricate and dispense optical appliances according to best practices and professional judgement.

An optician must:

- 1.1. have a valid prescription from an authorized prescriber that contains:
 1. the name of the prescriber;
 2. signature of prescriber, or if a signature stamp is used, the stamp is initialed by office staff;
 3. patient name;
 4. patient prescription;
 5. date of examination;
- 1.2. verify the suitability of the optical appliance;
- 1.3. conduct a **needs assessment** of the patient prior to dispensing of the optical appliance;
- 1.4. only dispense duplicated lenses when there is no change in the refractive value;
- 1.5. confirm the suitability of a prescription to a patient if duplicating existing glasses and note this duplication on the patient's record; and
- 1.6. use professional judgment when filling prescriptions from out of province or out of country and must meet the requirements noted in 1.1.

Eyeglasses

2. An optician must be registered with the College in accordance with the regulations to perform the **restricted activity** of dispensing corrective lenses for the purpose of dispensing eyeglasses.

¹ Words in bold font are listed in the glossary.

² The term "regulated member" and "registrant" may be used interchangeably

An optician must:

- 2.1. apply the necessary calculations to interpret and adapt the given prescription for equivalency and according to the patient's assessed needs;
- 2.2. when dispensing eyeglasses, be authorized to perform this service, complete any required needs assessments, take all necessary measurements required for the eyeglasses, and provide appropriate **opticianry services** within their scope of practice;
- 2.3. when dispensing eyeglasses based on specifications from another regulated health professional, an optician must ensure records are complete and accurate; and
- 2.4. evaluate the optical prescription and advise the patient of suitability of lenses and frames considering occupational needs, hobbies, cosmetics, optics, maintenance, and geometric physics applied to the product purchased.

Contact Lenses

3. An optician must be registered with the College in accordance with the regulations and to perform the restricted activity of dispensing corrective lenses for the purpose of dispensing contact lenses and to use rose Bengal or Lissamine Green, or ophthalmic preparations of lidocaine in combination with fluorescein to stain eye tissue.

An optician must:

- 3.1. be registered with the COA in accordance with the regulations to be authorized to dispense contact lenses;
- 3.2. if is a **provisional contact lens provider**, only perform this restricted activity under supervision;
- 3.3. when completing a contact lens fitting, be authorized to perform this service, take all necessary measurements required for the type of contact lenses and provide appropriate opticianry services within their scope of practice; and
- 3.4. evaluate the optical prescription and advise the patient of the wear and care of lenses considering patient history, ocular health, occupational needs, hobbies, and cosmetics.
- 3.5. take a patient history and determine suitability of a patient for contact lens wear, including:
 - the health of the cornea, conjunctiva and lids, and integrity of the tear layer
 - baseline visual acuity, corneal curvature, clarity, and integrity
 - relevant environmental, occupational, avocational, and systemic health focus
4. An optician must be authorized to provide contact lens services when providing continuing care to assess an established contact lens patient.

An optician must:

- 4.1. complete all appropriate assessments required for the type of contact lenses and provide appropriate opticianry services within their scope of practice; and
- 4.2. when dispensing contact lenses based on contact lens specifications from another regulated health professional, an optician must ensure records are complete and accurate.

Low Vision Devices

5. When assessing for and providing services for low vision, an optician must be skilled and knowledgeable to provide this service.

An optician must:

- 5.1. provide the patient guidance and ongoing consultation on the use of the device; and
- 5.2. take any measurements required for the low vision device and provide appropriate opticianry services within their scope of practice.

Supervision of a Restricted Activity

6. An optician may supervise a student enrolled in an optician program, a provisional optician or provisional contact lens practitioner, or an optician who is subject to a condition of supervision.

An optician who is supervising must:

- 6.1. consent to serve as a supervisor;
- 6.2. be authorized to perform the restricted activity being supervised;
- 6.3. take responsibility and accountability for the supervision of the restricted activity being performed by the person being supervised and ensure the student or optician being supervised is practicing in accordance with the standards;
- 6.4. provide supervision by either
 - being present in the room and available to assist the student or optician being supervised, or
 - remain on site and available for consultation if the optician is of the opinion that the individual being supervised is able to safely and competently perform the restricted activity being performed (if conditions allow);
- 6.5. continually monitor and assess the delivery of the opticianry services being performed by the individual being supervised to ensure the level of supervision remains appropriate; and
- 6.6. upon request, provide names of supervisee(s) to the registrar.

A Provisional Optician must:

- 6.7. take responsibility and accountability of the services they provide and practice in accordance with all COA standards of practice, code of ethics, and legislation;
- 6.8. ensure documentation of services includes the identity of the supervisor at the time of services provided; and
- 6.9. upon request, provide names of supervisor(s) to the registrar.

Glossary Terms:

Dispensing: the act of designing, preparing, fitting, adjusting, verifying, or supplying optical devices

Low vision device: specialized equipment designed to help individuals with significant visual impairments. They include a variety of tools such as magnifiers, telescopes, and electronic aids. The goal of low vision devices is to provide greater independence and facilitate daily activities for those with low vision

Needs assessment: an assessment of the patient based on objective and subjective personal and health information used to determine the needs and best product (including, but not limited to eyeglasses, contact lenses, or low vision devices) to best satisfy the patient's opticianry needs

Opticianry Service: a service that comes within the practice of the regulated opticianry profession. In their practice, opticians do one or more of the following:

- Based on an optical prescription, design, supply, prepare, adjust, and dispense optical appliances and prostheses, including corrective lenses;
- Promote eye health and the correct use of optical appliances and prostheses through education of consumers and regulated members;
- Perform refractions and identify the need for corrective lenses;
- Conduct or collaborate in optical related research;
- When providing professional services referred to in this section, conduct assessments and make referrals where appropriate;
- Provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations.

(HPA, 2000, Opticians Professions Regulation, 2011)

Patient: a person, or caregiver of a person, receiving opticianry services from a registrant of the College

Provisional Contact Lens Provider: an optician who has applied for advanced authorization to dispense contact lenses, but has not yet completed the competency exam required by the council

Regulated member: an optician registered as a member of the College of Opticians of Alberta under section 33(1)(a) of the HPA (2000).

Restricted Activities: health service activities listed in the HPA and *Health Professions Restricted Activities Regulation* (2023) being performed that require specific skills and competence to be carried out safely. Restricted activities are not limited to any particular health profession and a number of regulated health practitioners may perform a specific restricted activity.

Related Documents:

College of Opticians of Alberta I (2000)

College of Opticians of Alberta *Professionalism Standards*

College of Opticians of Alberta *Practice Management Standards*

College of Opticians of Alberta *Record Keeping and Documentation Guidelines*

Health Professions Act (2000)

Health Professions Restricted Activities Regulations (2023)

Optician Profession Regulation (2011)

References:

College of Opticians of British Columbia. (2024). *Standard 8: Dispensing of vision appliances*. Retrieved from: <https://chcpbc.org/for-professions/opticians/resources/>

Health Professions Act, RSA 2000, c H-7

Health Professions Restricted Activities Regulations, Alta Reg 22/2023, s 60

Opticians Profession Regulation, Alta Reg 45/2011

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