

Discontinuation of Service

Revised: Aug. 2009

If you feel you are no longer able to provide care to a patient, for example the patient is abusive to you or your staff, or you learn that the patient has lied to you and you feel you have lost the trust necessary to provide care, it is possible for you to discontinue services. However, in doing so you must ensure that the requirements under the *Optometry Act* are met prior to discontinuance. Ontario Regulation 859/93 defines the discontinuance of professional services that are needed as an act of professional misconduct, unless,

- i. the patient requests the discontinuation,
- ii. alternative services are arranged, or
- iii. the patient is given a reasonable opportunity to arrange alternative services.

You may discontinue services pending payment of an outstanding account for services already provided, unless the needed services are of an emergency nature.

If you are initiating the discontinuation and you choose to arrange alternative services, this should be done in the same manner as making a referral by contacting the other practitioner and providing either copies of your clinical records or a summary report of the care that you provided. As an alternative to this, you may give your patient notice that on a specific date in the future you will no longer provide care and that in the meantime he or she would be well advised to seek the services of another practitioner. In setting the specific date after which your services will no longer be provided, you should be sensitive to such factors as the local availability of care and your patient's ability to travel as well as his/her clinical condition. You should also be prepared to provide either copies of your clinical records or a summary report of your care to the patient's new optometrist. In either situation where you have initiated the discontinuation of service, it would not be appropriate to charge the patient for forwarding copies of the clinical records or preparation of a report.

When you initiate discontinuation of services, it is critical to make the patient understand that it is in his/her best interest for you to transfer care to another practitioner. If appropriate, inform the patient that you will transfer their file to the practitioner of their choice. Above all, remember to maintain your professionalism throughout the period of transition.