



COLLEGE OF
Optometrists
OF ONTARIO



REGULATION AND YOU:
WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE
OF OPTOMETRISTS OF ONTARIO

WHY REGULATION MATTERS

Welcome to the College, and congratulations on this milestone in your career as an optometrist.

Ontario law gives more than two dozen health care professions the authority to self-regulate. Each profession is governed by a body like the College of Optometrists of Ontario. Together, these Colleges regulate more than 250,000 health care professionals, including you and your 2,000 fellow optometrists across the province.

Optometry has been a self-regulated profession in Ontario for almost 100 years, since 1919. That is a privilege and a great responsibility. Like every health regulatory college, we act in the public interest by:

- setting qualifications required to enter practice
- establishing conditions to maintain registration
- developing quality assurance programs to promote clinical excellence
- promoting safe and ethical practice by our members
- developing professional and ethical standards and guidelines
- responding to complaints—openly, fairly, and with authority—and holding members accountable for their conduct and practice

All of this helps to ensure that optometrists will provide care and practice according to the highest standards—and to give the public confidence in you and the profession.

HOW THE COLLEGE WORKS

As a College, our authority is detailed in legislation that includes the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, and the *Optometry Act, 1991*.

To set our strategic and policy direction, we have a Council of 18 members. This includes 9 optometrists elected by their peers; 8 public members appointed by the province; and one representative from the faculty at the University of

Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science. Council members serve on statutory committees, which support public safety by meeting certain regulatory responsibilities.

Council's role is similar to that of a board of directors. A staff team led by our Registrar carries out the College's day-to-day work.

THE COLLEGE WEBSITE

Please bookmark www.collegeoptom.on.ca, and visit the website frequently. It's your one-stop resource for the latest news, as well as information on:

- standards
- governance (legislation, by-laws, policies, and guidelines)
- quality assurance
- registration
- the complaints and discipline processes
- patient relations guidelines
- renewing your membership
- incorporating your practice
- upcoming events

KEEPING CURRENT

On the website under the "Resources" tab you'll find the Optometric Practice Reference (OPR), which includes the current regulatory and professional standards of practice for optometry in Ontario. The OPR covers everything from scope of practice, to procedures, to record-keeping. This is a living document, so please check the OPR for regular updates.

Under the "Members" tab on the website, you'll find administrative and clinical policies and guidelines not covered in the OPR. These range from advertising, to anti-discrimination policies, to a practice advisory on preventing sexual abuse in optometric practices.

ENSURING CONTINUED QUALITY

It's vital for optometrists to maintain and enhance their knowledge, skills, and judgment, so that they can provide appropriate high-quality care to the public.

Under the Quality Assurance (QA) program, optometrists must take part in continuing education—70 hours in a three-year cycle. This supports you in your ongoing competence, and keeps you updated with changes in technology, practice scope and standards, changes in practice environments, and other relevant issues.

Another key part of QA is Practice Assessment, a review of patient records. The College may randomly select you for this assessment, which helps you to improve your patient care and management. QA can also include a Practice Evaluation to assess a member's clinical ability, and remediation and coaching as needed.

Overall, QA protects the public by giving you the tools and feedback to continually improve your expertise and abilities. You may find detailed information in the "Quality Assurance" section of the College's website.

STAYING IN CONTACT

As part of our efforts to communicate with our members, you can expect to receive:

- *In Focus* (formerly *Bulletin*), the College newsletter that informs you of policies, issues, and legislation that may affect your practice.
- The annual report, which outlines key achievements from each College committee.
- Occasional practice advisories, as issues emerge from committees. These advisories help to clarify and highlight certain standards.

The College communicates with its members electronically as well as by mail, so it is important to provide us with your current email address.

ENSURING A COMPLIANT PRACTICE

Every member is responsible for ensuring that their practice arrangements are in compliance with current professional misconduct and conflict-of-interest regulations. You also need to be aware that your practice is subject to conditions, such as continuing education hours and maintenance of practice currency in Canada, over a set period of time. These are specified in the Registration Regulation under the *Optometry Act, 1991*.

Do you need to clarify a regulation? Get answers about practice issues? Discuss a patient scenario? For guidance, as well as direction to helpful resources, contact our practice advisor at feedback@collegeoptom.on.ca.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND UPDATES

Every year in the fall, we will send you a renewal notice. You can complete the form and pay for your renewal online.

The College collects certain details about all members and makes that available on a public register. Anyone can search the register for a member's registration status; contacts; education; any restrictions on registration because of professional conduct issues (called terms, conditions, or limitations); and information (if applicable) on disciplinary or other proceedings. This is all part of being open and accountable.

If you move your practice location or change your contact information, please notify the College within 14 days so we can update our records and stay in touch.

GETTING INVOLVED

Self-regulation is possible because of the commitment to quality and standards shown by members of the profession. You can be part of this ongoing legacy.

There are many ways to participate in the work of the College, like serving on committees, volunteering to be a peer assessor, or even running for Council. Simply providing the College with your feedback on policies and programs is a helpful contribution.

By getting involved, our members grow personally and professionally, learn more about the guidelines under which we operate, and gain even more of an appreciation of what's in the best interests of patients.

VISION:

The best eye health and vision for everyone in Ontario, through excellence in optometric care.

MISSION:

To serve the public by regulating Ontario's optometrists. The College uses its authority to guide the profession in the delivery of safe, ethical, progressive, and quality eye care at the highest standards.

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