



Funding for Therapy and Counsellingⁱ

Information for Applicants

The *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* requires the health regulatory Colleges, including the College of Optometrists of Ontario, to have a Program of Funding for Therapy and Counselling. This funding program is administered by the Patient Relations Committee (PRC). It is intended to compensate the costs of therapy for a person if it is alleged, in a complaint or report, that the person was sexually abused by an optometrist while the person was a patient of the optometrist.

The College of Optometrists has established a fund for this purpose and application forms are available for individuals who wish to request funding for therapy.

You may have questions about this process. Answers to some common questions are provided below. If you have not found an answer to your question in this document, or if you wish to further discuss the process of filing a funding application, do not hesitate to contact us - the contact details are below.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

In order for a person to be eligible for funding there must be an allegation made, in a complaint or report, that the person was sexually abused by a current or former optometrist while the person was a patient of the optometrist or within one year after the individual ceased to be the optometrist's patient.

Who considers the Application?

Applications for funding are considered by the PRC, made up of four optometrists and four members of the public. The PRC reviews each application and determines:

- a) whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria, and
- b) the amount of funding that is to be awarded for therapy and counselling.

This funding is then paid directly to the therapist or counsellor for the therapy and counselling they provide.

[I have made a complaint to the College regarding the alleged sexual abuse. Do I have to wait until the complaints/discipline process has concluded before applying for funding?](#)

No. Recent changes to the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, 1991 provide that funding will become available for patients alleging sexual abuse by an optometrist, even before any finding of guilt may be made against the optometrist. These changes are in effect as of May 1, 2018.

[I have already attended therapy or counselling. Can I apply for past therapy costs?](#)

Under some conditions, the College may assist in paying for past therapy. To qualify, past therapy must not have been paid by any provider (OHIP or private insurance); the therapy must have taken place after the reported abuse; and the applicant or therapist must provide invoices or receipts with therapy costs and dates. The *Regulated Health Professions Act* requires that funds be paid directly to the therapist. The therapist must, therefore, agree to reimburse the applicant in return for funds paid directly to him/her for past therapy costs.

[How do I apply for funding for therapy and counselling?](#)

You need to complete an application form (**Application for Funding for Therapy and Counselling**). This form provides the PRC with the information they need to assess your eligibility. Additionally, you will have to attest that you have no family ties to the therapist or counsellor chosen and that the services provided to you are not eligible for payment by any other provider, such as OHIP or private insurance (**Attestation of Applicant**).

You do not need to have a therapist or counsellor identified to apply for funding. If you have a therapist or counsellor or know who you would like to see, additional attestation will have to be signed by the therapist or counsellor. Please note that if you have chosen an unregulated health professional to be your therapist or counsellor, a different attestation form should be used. This form must be completed before funding can begin.

Application forms can be downloaded from our website:

<https://www.collegeoptom.on.ca/public/complaints/patient-relations>.

[How long does a patient have to apply for funding?](#)

The funding is available for a five-year period that starts on the earlier of the following dates:

- the date that the person first received therapy related to the alleged sexual abuse (the therapy can take place at any time after the abuse occurred) for which the person is requesting funding, or

- the date it is alleged, in a complaint or report, that the person was sexually abused by an optometrist while the person was a patient of the optometrist.

To receive the full benefit of the funding, applicants should submit their applications as early as possible.

Where do I send my application?

If you want to apply for this funding, please contact:

Eyal Birenberg, Coordinator, Investigations and Hearings
College of Optometrists of Ontario
900 - 65 St Clair Ave E
Toronto ON M4T 2Y3
Tel: 416-962-4071, ext. 61
Fax: 416-962-4073
Toll Free: 1-888-825-2554
EBirenberg@collegeoptom.on.ca
www.collegeoptom.on.ca

What happens after I apply for funding?

College staff will confirm receipt of your application, and will tell you whether any additional information is required. You will also be notified of the timelines associated with the PRC's review of your application.

Does the applicant have to meet with the PRC?

No. The PRC will make its decision based on documentation only.

Is there a requirement for a psychological assessment to support the need for therapy?

No.

What else should I know about the application process?

You and your therapist or counsellor must keep all information obtained through the application for funding process, including the fact that funding has been granted, confidential. A decision by the PRC that you are eligible for funding does not constitute a finding of professional misconduct against the optometrist and shall not be considered by any other Committee of the College dealing with the matter.

How much funding is available?

The law sets out a maximum amount of funding that can be awarded, based on a formula provided in the regulation. While the maximum amount will vary depending on specific circumstances, it is approximately \$16,000.00. Once a patient's eligibility is determined and the application is processed, the College will notify the applicant of the amount of funding they will receive. In some circumstances, if the services being used are also covered by OHIP or a private insurance plan, the College would only pay the amount not covered.

Are there any restrictions on how I use the funding?

Yes. The legislation currently specifies the funding must be used only to pay for therapy or counselling and can be paid only to your therapist or counsellor. Funding for any other purposes may be approved in the future but is currently not available. The PRC will consider specific requests for therapy or counselling and will determine whether it is captured by the legislation.

Are there any restrictions on which therapist or counsellor I use?

Yes. Even though you have a choice as to which therapist or counsellor you would like to see, there are some restrictions. The therapist or counsellor cannot have any family relationship with you and cannot have been found guilty of professional misconduct of a sexual nature or been found liable in Court for an act of a similar nature. You can select a therapist or counsellor who is not a regulated health professional; however, you will be asked to confirm that you understand that in such a case, there is no avenue for professional discipline.

What are other things I may want to consider when choosing a therapist or counsellor?

The funding for therapy and counselling is meant to assist you in dealing with the effects of the alleged sexual abuse by an optometrist. These funds are allocated in such a way that you can find a type of therapy or counselling that works best for you. There are many types of therapists/counsellors that can be extremely helpful, and it can be a difficult choice. Some of the things you may wish to consider are:

- Previous training or experience in treating the effects of sexual abuse.
- The number of sessions you need to attend, based on your counsellor's experience and expertise. If you exceed the maximum amount approved for you, you must pay the difference.
- Is the therapist or counsellor a registered member of a regulated health profession? If not, you have no way of knowing whether he or she is appropriately qualified to practice. You may also not have a governing body to contact if you have concerns about the therapist's conduct or skills.

Can I use more than one therapist or counsellor?

Yes, up to the maximum amount awarded by the PRC. The College will process the invoices as they come in to the College.

How will I know the status of my account if the money is paid directly to the therapist or counsellor?

The College will send you periodic reports keeping you informed as to how much money is left for the costs of your therapy. You can contact us if you wish to receive additional information.

Who can I contact to find out more information?

Eyal Birenberg, Coordinator, Investigations and Hearings
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ⁱ This document has been developed based on *INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS ABOUT FUNDING for THERAPY and COUNSELLING*, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO).