

# Who Does What?

## College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) and Opticians Association of Canada (OAC)

All opticians in BC must be licensed with COBC, and many also choose to maintain a membership with the OAC. Learn more about how these organizations differ and which one you should contact when you have an inquiry.



COLLEGE of OPTICIANS  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
a B.C. Health Regulator



OPTICIANS  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA  
ASSOCIATION DES  
OPTICIENS DU CANADA

### COBC

### OAC

#### PURPOSE



#### Serves the public by regulating opticians

COBC regulates opticians, as health care professionals, for the protection and safety of the public.

#### Serves the profession by providing tools to support the professional practice of opticians

The OAC promotes Licensed Opticians and opticianry as a profession.

#### ANNUAL FEES



#### Mandatory

Initial registration and annual renewal are required to be an optician. Those who are registered with COBC are called **registrants**.

#### Optional

Annual membership and payment of dues are optional. Payment grants access to association benefits/functions. Those who choose to pay are called **members**.

#### GOVERNANCE



#### Board of Directors

Acts solely in the public interest and is accountable to the BC Ministry of Health.

#### Board and provincial chapters

Represent the interests of the profession and are accountable to OAC members.

#### ADVOCACY



#### No advocacy work

COBC does not advocate for the profession.

#### Advocates for opticians

One of the primary roles of the OAC is to advocate for and advance the interests of opticians. The OAC represents the profession to government, employers, and other agencies.

## No negotiations

COBC is not involved in negotiations.

## NEGOTIATIONS



## Negotiates for opticians

The OAC may negotiate with:

- Third-party insurers regarding benefits amounts for eyewear.
- The provincial government regarding low-income and senior clients' coverage.
- The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) regarding coverage for Indigenous clients.

## Investigates complaints

Responsible for investigating all complaints about opticians in a fair and transparent manner, and for taking appropriate action to ensure client safety.

## COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC



## No role in complaints

Does not investigate opticians or represent opticians under investigation by COBC. An optician may obtain legal support through their professional liability insurance coverage or their own lawyer.

## Quality assurance

COBC is responsible for administering a quality assurance program to ensure opticians remain competent throughout their careers.

## CONTINUING COMPETENCY



## Quality improvement

The OAC supports the professional development of opticians by providing continuing education materials and activities.

## Reviews and accepts accreditation decisions

COBC reviews and approves the accreditation recommendations provided by Accreditation Canada for optician education programs in Canada.

## ACCREDITATION



## Provides input

The OAC is not involved in the accreditation process but may provide stakeholder input into accreditation criteria.

## Develops standards

Develops and enforces professional standards in consultation with registrants and other stakeholders.

## STANDARDS & GUIDELINES



## Provides input

May provide stakeholder input into the development of standards through consultation.

## Determines competencies to be tested

Determines the elements to be tested on licensing exams and verifies the eligibility of those who register.

## LICENSING EXAMINATIONS



## Provides input

Not involved in exams, but may provide stakeholder input as to what should be included/removed through consultation.

## Required for registration

COBC requires opticians to have liability insurance to protect the public.

## LIABILITY INSURANCE



## Provided with membership

The OAC sources and provides professional liability insurance as part of the membership package.

## Educates the public about opticians as a regulated health profession

Provides information to the public on what is required to be licensed, and on the importance of seeing a Licensed Optician.

### CONSUMER EDUCATION



## Educates the public about what opticians do

Promotes the importance of seeing a Licensed Optician and may provide information about eye health, or products, for opticians to provide to the public.

### PRACTICE ADVICE



## Supports opticians to understand the rules

Provides practice advice to opticians regarding the legislation, regulations, bylaws, practice standards, and code of ethics that opticians are required to follow in BC.

## Supports opticians to improve their professionalism and their businesses

Provides practice advice to opticians to build their skills and product knowledge, and to support their businesses. Supports opticians to utilize their full scope of practice.

### AUTHORITY



## Legislation

COBC obtains its authority through the *Health Professions Act* as a non-profit regulatory body to protect the public.

## Incorporation

The OAC is a non-governmental, non-profit organization to support opticians. It is subject to the regulations of *Corporations Canada*.

## When to contact COBC:

- When seeking information or help related to registration, renewal, reinstating registration, criminal record checks, quality assurance program requirements, or patient relations.
- With questions about complying with provincial/federal legislation, the Opticians Regulation, or the COBC Bylaws, Standards of Practice, or Code of Ethics.
- With complaints, right-to-title issues, or mandatory reporting questions.

Phone: 604-742-6472  
Toll-free: 1-866-949-6472  
Website: [www.cobc.ca](http://www.cobc.ca)  
Email: [reception@cobc.ca](mailto:reception@cobc.ca)

## When to contact the OAC:

- For help or advice on an issue/concern relating to your business practice.
- With questions about upcoming educational seminars.
- When seeking information or assistance related to government or third-party contracts.
- For advocacy support on an issue that is important to you (increase in scope of practice, as an example).
- With questions about obtaining liability insurance or other member benefits, such as auto/home insurance or other discounts/programs available to members.
- To place an employment ad.
- To inquire about the availability of optician employment opportunities or for comparisons of wages or benefits.

Toll-free: 1-800-847-3155  
Website: [www.opticians.ca](http://www.opticians.ca)  
Email: [canada@opticians.ca](mailto:canada@opticians.ca)