

Standards of Practice: A Client's Guide



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

Opticians are healthcare professionals who dispense vision appliances, such as eyeglasses and contact lenses. Opticians use specialized skills, knowledge, and feedback from clients to determine what eyewear best suits their needs.

As regulated health professionals, opticians are committed to maintaining [COBC's Standards of Practice](#).

Why we have Standards of Practice

COBC's Standards of Practice define the minimum level of performance and professional practice required of an optician to ensure service that is ethical and safe for the public. A standard is an expected and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be measured.

The Standards of Practice apply to all opticians in BC, regardless of the environment in which they practice. Each optician must take full responsibility for meeting these standards and ensuring that the client's best interests are met.

How the Standards apply to clients

When you visit an optician, you are entitled to receive safe, accessible, culturally relevant, high-quality vision care, no matter what. However, the better you understand your optician's role and professional obligations, the better prepared you will be to ask appropriate questions, request the services you need, and advocate for yourself. In the rare and unfortunate circumstance that an optician fails to meet the standards during the course of your care, you also have a right to seek resolution through COBC. Understanding the Standards of Practice will help you to identify when an optician is not fulfilling their responsibilities and to share relevant details with COBC.

Using this document

COBC has prepared this document as a companion to our full Standards of Practice, with an emphasis on the client perspective. Under each header, you will find an explanation of what you can expect from your optician with regard to that specific standard. To see the full standard, simply click on the header.

Throughout the document, technical terms are underlined. Clicking on an underlined term will redirect you to the Glossary, where additional information is provided.

Should you have questions about any of the standards, terms, or concepts in this document, the COBC team is happy to help! We invite you to contact us at reception@cobc.ca or 604-742-6472 ext. 1701.

What to Expect from Your Optician

Standard 1: Client-Centred Practice

The client can expect that their input will be acknowledged, valued, and integrated into all aspects of service delivery. They can expect professional integrity from their optician.

Standard 2: Evidence-Informed Practice

The client can expect that the optical services they receive from their optician:

1. Are informed by relevant clinical research, professional experience, and knowledge.
 2. Are specific to their circumstances and individual needs.
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Standard 3: Collaborative Care

The client can expect their optician to collaborate with relevant regulated health care professionals, students, and unregulated staff to choose the approach that will result in the highest quality of care.

Standard 4: Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility, and Anti-Racism

The client can expect that their optician will take active steps to identify, address, prevent, and eliminate Indigenous-specific racism in the practice environment. The client can also expect their optician to have knowledge about different types of trauma and their impact on Indigenous clients—including how intergenerational and historical trauma affects many Indigenous Peoples during health care experiences—and to focus on the resilience and strength the client brings to the health care encounter.

Standard 5: Competence

The client can expect their optician to be competent in all areas of practice for which care is provided. This requires that the optician maintain the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience to deliver quality care.

Standard 6: Professionalism

The client can expect their optician to provide respectful treatment and services in compliance with ethical and legal requirements.

Standard 7: Safety and Infection Control

The client can expect that their optician has sterilized or sanitized all products and instruments used in client care, and that relevant safety plans and protocols will be followed throughout service delivery.

Standard 8: Dispensing of Vision Appliances

The client can expect their optician to conduct an assessment, take appropriate measurements, and produce vision appliances that meet the client's visual needs.

Standard 9: Independent Automated Refraction

The client can expect that independent automated refraction services will be provided by an optician who is trained and certified to perform independent automated refractions safely and effectively.

Standard 10: Remote Practice and Technology

The client can expect that their optician's use of technology will not negatively impact their safety or the quality of care they receive.

Standard 11: Delegation and Supervision

The client can expect to be informed of the roles of supervised personnel and made aware that the services provided by these personnel are supervised or delegated by the optician.

Standard 12: Privacy and Confidentiality

The client can expect that their optician will safeguard their personal and health information and protect their privacy and confidentiality as required by relevant legislation.

Standard 13: Conflict of Interest

The client can expect that their optician will deliver services in the client's best interests and that conflicts of interest will be disclosed and managed.

Standard 14: Record Keeping and Billing

The client can expect that the health and financial records kept by their optician are accurate, understandable, complete, and confidential, and will be provided or transferred at the client's request.

Standard 15: Communication and Marketing

The client can expect their optician to communicate in a professional, transparent, and respectful manner that promotes their understanding of the proposed services. They can expect that the optician's communications, advertising, and marketing activities are in the public interest.

Standard 16: Risk Management and Quality Improvement

The client can expect that quality improvement activities will be an integral component of their optician's practice and that all efforts will be taken to minimize risk and ensure quality care.

Glossary of Terms

Conflict of interest:

Any circumstance in which your personal interests; the interests of a close friend, family member, business associate, corporation or partnership in which you hold a significant interest; the interests of a person to whom you owe an obligation; or the interests of an organization of which you are a member or with which you have any other affiliation could influence your decisions and impair your ability to act in a client's best interests, impartially and without bias.

Delegate:

To assign part or all of an unrestricted activity to an unregulated staff member or student.

Dispense:

To design, prepare, fit, adjust, verify, or supply.

Independent automated refraction:

A procedure conducted without the involvement of a prescriber that assesses the refractive error of the eye—without assessing eye health—and assists in determining whether a client may require a vision appliance to correct deficiencies in their visual acuity. Also commonly referred to as a “sight test.”

Opticianry:

The health profession in which the following services are provided:

- a. Dispensing of vision appliances, through:
 - i. The use of information contained in prescriptions, contact lens records and assessment records.
 - ii. The duplication of corrective eyeglass lenses, with no change in refractive value, using a lensometer or similar device.
- b. Conducting of independent automated refractions, including those performed upon prescriber request.
- c. Promotion of eye health and proper use of vision appliances.

Practice environment:

A location in which an optician performs opticianry duties, including mobile service.

Prescriber:

A qualified medical practitioner (most often an optometrist or ophthalmologist) who produces an optical prescription or contact lens record based on an assessment that includes an eye health exam.

Supervise:

To maintain a constant presence and close contact with a supervisee in the same practice environment, and to review and approve all services provided to clients by the supervisee.

Verify:

To inspect and confirm, before supplying a product to a client, that the following specifications are met:

- a. In the case of corrective eyeglass lenses, the specifications set out in the authorizing document provided by the client or provided by another individual on behalf of the client.
- b. In the case of contact lenses, the specifications set out in the contact lens record or authorizing document provided by the client or provided by another individual on behalf of the client.

Vision appliance:

An appliance or device designated or offered for a vision condition, including a corrective eyeglass lens, contact lens, or low vision aid (but excluding complete ready-to-wear eyeglasses not designated or offered for client use).