

College of Opticians of Ontario

Frequently Asked Questions about Delegation

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The College receives many inquiries regarding the issue of delegation, more specifically the circumstances in which an unregistered person can perform tasks in dispensing under delegation from an Optician. Under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA) the "...dispensing, for vision or eye problems, subnormal vision devices, contact lenses or eye glasses other than simple magnifiers" is a controlled act. Unregistered persons may not perform a controlled act as defined in the RHPA. To give a little history on this subject, the College of Opticians and the College of Optometrists and various other stakeholders met several times to develop a policy on delegation. The two Colleges produced a Joint Report on Delegation in 1998. A summary of the report outlining the agreed upon rules for delegation was printed in the College of Opticians' June 1998 newsletter and sent to all registrants. The two Colleges agreed that "dispensing" is defined as the preparation, adaptation, and delivery of eye glasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices to a person. The two Colleges further agreed that all functions of dispensing may be delegated to an unregistered person with the **exception** of three core cognitive functions (printed here in bold type) and behaviours. An Optician **may not** delegate the following:

1. **The determination and recording of the specifications of the eyeglasses, contact lenses, or subnormal vision devices to be provided to a patient.** This means that an Optician must personally review the order as well as the patient's prescription. The Optician must determine whether the appliance that has been ordered is suitable for the patient, meets the patient's needs and will best achieve the visual correction that the patient requires. The Optician must also decide on the final parameters, and technical specifications of the appliance that is to be ordered. The Optician must sign the order and record the specifications of the appliance on the patient health record.
2. **The confirmation and recording of the appropriateness of the eye glasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices to be provided or delivered to the patient.** This means that the Optician must confirm the visual appliance after it has been fabricated according to their specifications, such that it is in conformance with the prescription, is suitable for the patient, and best achieves the visual correction that the patient requires. Also, part of this core cognitive function is any testing of the patient's visual acuity after the appliance has been fit to the patient's face. The Optician must record these determinations on the patient health record.
3. **The provision and recording of the necessary advice, counseling, and associated care to the patient about the use of the eye glasses, contact lenses or subnormal vision devices.** This means that the Optician must personally instruct the patient in the use and care of the

particular visual appliance as well as advice about when to come back for a check-up or realignment_ This advice must be recorded on the patient health record.

The two Colleges also agreed on common rules for delegation as follows:

1. A registrant must have established a professional relationship with a person prior to delegating any part of dispensing for that person (hereinafter the "patient").
2. A registrant delegating and the person receiving delegation must each be identified in the record of care made by the registrant about the patient
3. A registrant must ensure that the standards of practice of the registrant's profession are maintained by the person receiving the delegation.
4. A registrant is responsible for any failure on the part of a person receiving delegation to maintain the standards of practice.
5. A registrant must be physically present in the same facility with the person receiving delegation at the time the registrant delegates tasks in dispensing to that person.
6. A registrant must be physically present in the same facility and available to intervene when a delegated act of dispensing is being performed on a patient.
7. A registrant must ensure that the tasks which the registrant delegates be patient-specific and appropriate.
8. A registrant must identify to the College, at its request, any person to whom a task of dispensing has been delegated.
9. A registrant must ensure that any person receiving delegation has received training appropriate to the delegated tasks to be performed.

It is clear from the rules that an Optician must be on the premises both at the time of the delegation and at the time that the delegated act is being performed. The College of Opticians will not accept that any tasks in dispensing be performed by an unregistered person without the Optician being physically present. Registrants should be very aware that the decision of whether or not to delegate tasks in dispensing to unregistered personnel lies solely with the Optician and is at all times at their discretion. A registrant should not delegate if, in the registrant's professional judgment, it is not appropriate to do so, would be contrary to the standards of practice, or would place the registrant in a conflict of interest.

Please feel free to contact the College for further clarification on delegation.