



DRAFT Standards of Ethical Conduct for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

Introduction

Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians in Aotearoa New Zealand work with individuals, families, whānau and communities. Their role is to provide good eye care, making the patient's eye, vision and general health their first priority.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) is the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. It shapes the diverse historical and contemporary realities of Māori and all other settlers and their descendants. The principles of Te Tiriti – partnership, protection and participation – should underpin the provision of optical services in Aotearoa New Zealand. Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians must understand the needs, values and beliefs of Māori, be alert to the health needs of Māori in their community and promote equitable access for Māori to good eye health care.

The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code) affirms the central importance of respect for patient autonomy and informed consent in the provision of health services in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCA Act), under which these standards are issued by the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board), recognises the community expectation that practising Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians will maintain their competence.

The purpose of these Standards of Ethical Conduct is to set clear expectations, for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, patients and the community, of professional behaviour and ethical conduct. Failure to uphold these standards could result in an employment, professional or disciplinary investigation and may be used to evaluate conduct by employers, commissioners, tribunals and courts.

These ethical standards should be read in conjunction with the Board's standards of clinical and cultural competence, scopes of practice, relevant statements and guidelines, as well as the HPCA Act, the Code, Te Tiriti and any relevant legislation.

The Standards

1. Respect patients

Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians shall respect patients by:

1. providing services in a way that respects individual dignity and independence
2. not discriminating on any prohibited ground, including age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or employment status
3. interacting with patients with courtesy and integrity
4. being sensitive to individual needs, values and beliefs and different cultures
5. involving family and whānau in accordance with the wishes of the patient
6. listening to patients and communicating effectively with them
7. giving patients the information they need to make decisions
8. respecting patient choices about treatment and services
9. always maintaining appropriate professional boundaries
10. avoiding conflicts of interest and disclosing any personal interest in recommended options
11. treating information about patients as confidential and respecting their privacy
12. respecting a patient's right to make a complaint and responding promptly and fairly.

2. Care for patients

Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians shall provide good care for patients by:

1. practising safely and effectively
2. taking good care in assessment, diagnosis, treatment and referrals
3. taking steps to alleviate patients' symptoms and distress, whether or not a cure is possible
4. maintaining a high level of professional competence and looking after their own health and wellbeing
5. accurately describing their skills and competencies
6. recognising and working within the limits of their competence
7. referring to another practitioner when appropriate

8. supporting a patient's right to a second opinion
9. delegating care only when appropriate and ensuring adequate supervision
10. ensuring that incentives and targets do not affect their clinical judgement
11. protecting patients by acting on concerns a colleague may not be practising safely, including by notifying an employer or appropriate authority
12. being open and honest when an adverse event occurs.

3. Work collaboratively with others

Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians shall work collaboratively with colleagues and other practitioners caring for the patient by:

1. communicating clearly and effectively
2. facilitating co-ordination and continuity of care
3. supporting teamwork and co-operation in the patient's best interests
4. advocating clear roles and responsibilities
5. appropriately acknowledging and respecting the role and expertise of others.

4. Contribute to improving the health of the community

Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians shall contribute to the health of the community by:

1. using health care resources wisely
2. promoting eye health through disease prevention and control
3. supporting community education and screening
4. promoting equitable access to services for Māori
5. advocating for improved eye health care for vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities and people unable to access necessary care (eg, people in remote, rural areas or affected by poverty).

These Standards are an overarching statement by the Board of professional behaviour and ethical conduct. They are not intended to be an exhaustive statement of a practitioner's ethical responsibilities. Other documents, such as the 'Guideline on the Maintenance of Professional Boundaries for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians' (2019) and the 'Statement on Internet and Electronic Communication' (2015) provide supplementary guidance on specific conduct areas.