

Policy

Type:	College of Optometrists of Ontario		
Name:	Optometric Services During Job Actions		
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Purpose

This policy outlines the expectations upon an optometrist when considering or undertaking a job action.

Overview

Optometrists are expected to fulfill their professional responsibilities and ensure patients' visual well-being and the provision of appropriate care for all patients during job actions.

Optometrists should consider alternate approaches to resolve their concerns before undertaking a job action. If an optometrist decides to take job action, they are expected to consider patients' best interests, the ramifications of depriving optometric care and the risk of harm when withdrawing any or all services.

Requirements

Upon consideration, if an optometrist proceeds to withdraw services, they must take steps to mitigate any adverse effects on patients and public. A refusal to treat or a referral that results in a delayed treatment is not in patients' best interests.

As such, any referral to another regulated health professional must align with the professional standard in the [Optometric Practice Reference](#). In situations where there is intention to discontinue care permanently, an optometrist must meet the requirements outlined under both the [Ontario Regulation 119/94](#) and the College's [Discontinuation of Services](#) policy.

Decisions to accept patient(s) must not be discriminatory or a practice that would be considered disgraceful, dishonourable, unprofessional and/or unethical by the public and/or other optometrists. The [Human Rights Code](#), 1990 prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on 'protected grounds' including, but not limited to, age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, creed, disability, sex, and sexual orientation. Patients with a valid OHIP card are entitled to access insured health services at no charge. As such, a refusal may also be inconsistent with the *Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act*, 2004.

Urgent Care

An optometrist must continue to provide urgent care, or any treatment needed to prevent harm, suffering and/or deterioration during a job action. If an optometrist is unable to provide care, alternate care must be arranged for the patient within an appropriate timeline. In determining urgent care, an optometrist must use their clinical judgement and consider their professional responsibility to ensure a patient's well-being when assessing that patient's individual needs.