

Canadian Orthoptic Council

Practice Patterns of Canadian Orthoptists

An orthoptist is an eye care/health professional with a specialized body of knowledge in vision science with an emphasis on binocular vision, ocular motility and related disorders of vision. Orthoptists may function in a variety of ways in Canada (as clinicians, educators, researchers and administrators). As clinicians orthoptists always function as physician extenders to ophthalmologists and neuro ophthalmologists. Some examples of orthoptists in a clinical setting and currently in practice are:

1. The orthoptist interacts with patients at the same site or satellite office as several ophthalmologists (multi-specialty practice or specialty practice). Patients may be referred to the orthoptist for sensorimotor evaluation and non-surgical management of binocular single vision disorders. The orthoptist is an employee of the hospital or clinic and that employer collects any fees for orthoptic services.
2. The orthoptist works side by side with the ophthalmologist providing technical support as well as sensorimotor evaluation and non surgical management of binocular single vision disorders. The orthoptist is an employee of the ophthalmologist or company of the ophthalmologists. The employer collects any fees for orthoptic services.
3. Several physicians in one geographic area who individually do not have the need for a full time orthoptist may “share” the services of one orthoptist who may travel from office to office throughout the week. Each office pays her/him a salary and each office collects any fees generated for orthoptic services.

Please note:

The usual arrangement for insurance coverage for the Orthoptist is through the employer however there is no guarantee that individual locations, insurance companies or government institutions will automatically accept this arrangement. Specifics can vary by province, area or insurance carrier. The onus is on the Orthoptist to confirm insurance coverage whatever the practice pattern might be. The Council does not condone the Orthoptist as an independent practitioner.

Professional Practice Guidelines

The Canadian Orthoptic Council has approved of guidelines for the professional conduct of orthoptics in keeping with the current standards of health care in Canada. Certification of competency bestowed by the Canadian Orthoptic Council will be conditional upon the acceptance of these professional practice guidelines, which include the following a) Scope of Practice document b) Ethic Statement and c) Requirements for recertification:

a) Scope of Practice document:

CANADIAN ORTHOPTIST SCOPE OF PRACTICE (June 2005)

An orthoptist is an eye care/health professional with a specialized body of knowledge in vision science with an emphasis on binocular vision, ocular motility and related disorders of vision. The practice of Orthoptics includes the assessment, evaluation, and identification, of disorders of binocular vision, ocular motility and related disorders of vision for the purpose of enhancing, or restoring, function; Orthoptists formulate, implement, and monitor related non-surgical treatments. Orthoptists may function as clinicians, educators, researchers, and administrators. Orthoptists collaborate with patients, their families and caregivers, other eye care and health professionals, and health care providers, to support quality patient care.

Core Competencies

- *Quantification of visual function*
- *Qualification and quantification of ocular misalignment (strabismus) and related sensory anomalies*
- *Determination of the cause of patients' presenting subjective symptoms and objective signs relating to abnormal binocular visual function and ocular motility.*
- *Implementation and monitoring of non-surgical treatment of binocular vision, ocular motility and related disorders of vision.*
- *Recommendations for the enhancement and/or restoration of patients binocular vision, ocular motility and related disorders of vision.*
- *Patient advocacy and education*

Detailed Practice Statement

The functions of an Orthoptist in the practice of Orthoptics include, but are not limited to:

Compilation of a detailed ophthalmic and general medical history

Visual function assessment

Subjective and objective evaluation of:

- *visual acuity*
- *contrast sensitivity*
- *color vision*
- *refractive status*
- *accommodative status*

- *field of vision*

Orthoptists are trained in the utilization of topical ophthalmic medications, and instill these, on order(s) from an ophthalmologist, for diagnostic purposes.

Binocular vision assessment

Subjective and objective evaluation of:

- *sensory status/function, including potential for and implications of:*
 - *fusion*
 - *stereoscopic visual function*
 - *diplopia/confusion*
 - *retinal correspondence*
 - *suppression*
 - *field of single binocular vision*
- *motor function*
 - *extra-ocular motor function*
 - *fusional amplitudes*
 - *angles of ocular misalignment*
 - *vergence capacities*
 - *binocular visual acuity*
- *binocular potential*
 - *prediction of functional improvement via treatment*

Ocular motility assessment

- *identification, qualification, and quantification of ocular misalignment*
- *gradation of extra-ocular muscle function*

Formulation of a comprehensive treatment plan including differential diagnosis and recommendations, for the enhancement, and/or restoration, of vision and/or binocular vision.

Pre and Post operative assessments for ocular surgery to determine management and outcomes.

Implementation and **monitoring** of non-surgical treatments.

Documentation with comprehensive records of the assessment process, differential diagnosis, recommendations, treatments initiated, and follow-up schedule.

Communication of information regarding ocular condition, treatment options and expected outcomes, to patients, their families/caregivers and other relevant health care providers.

Ethical Standards of Orthoptic Practice

Orthoptists certified in Canada will adhere to a professional code of ethics approved by the Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC), and The Canadian Orthoptic Society (TCOS).

Continuing Competence

An Orthoptist functioning in a capacity of a clinician, educator, researcher, and/or administrator will:

- *maintain relevant theoretical knowledge*
- *identify learning needs and seek opportunities for meeting those needs*

- share knowledge with patients/families, colleagues, health care providers and the public
- acquire knowledge of evolving themes in Orthoptics, Ophthalmology, Health Care, and Society, that impact on the practice of Orthoptics

Specifically the Orthoptist Educator

- promotes a learning environment that enhances the education of patients, relatives, and caregivers as well as students of Orthoptics (orthoptic students, medical students, residents, ophthalmology fellows) and other health care professionals and related services.

Specifically the Orthoptist Researcher

-promotes a practice environment that supports the conduct of clinical vision science and research

Specifically the Orthoptist Administrator

*-promotes the advancement of the profession of Orthoptics
-monitors and appraises the effectiveness of the practice of orthoptics, and eye healthcare in general, and modifies it accordingly*

b) Ethic Statement:

CODE OF ETHICS FOR CANADIAN ORTHOPTISTS (June 2005)

The Code of Ethics for Canadian Orthoptists follows the tenet that, as health care professionals, orthoptists certified in Canada must pursue the highest possible ethical standards, both on an individual and collective basis. The purpose of this Code is to acknowledge our acceptance of responsibility and trust accorded to us by both the public and our health care colleagues, and to recognize the accountability which is integral to that trust.

This code, as approved by the Canadian Orthoptic Council, establishes the standards of professional ethical conduct which each Canadian Certified Orthoptist is expected to observe.

**A Canadian Certified Orthoptist shall recognize and be accountable to the Canadian Orthoptic Council and its professional practice guidelines as they pertain to the practice of Orthoptics.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall abide by a pledge of confidentiality to protect the patient's privacy, unless otherwise required by law.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall deliver services in a professional manner, without misrepresentation, within the accepted Scope of Practice, and within the national/provincial laws applicable to the practice of the profession.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall do no harm to patients, by act or omission.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall treat patients, their families, and other supporting individuals with dignity and respect, providing care without regard to culture, religion, race, gender, age, language, sexual orientation or social profile.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall maintain required levels of professional development and participate in career long self-directed learning.*

** A Certified Orthoptist shall work in partnership with ophthalmologists, patients, and their families and caregivers to provide the highest quality of care.*

I release the Canadian Orthoptic Council; its officers, directors and members, from liability for disciplinary or other actions taken in good faith pursuant to its bylaws, guidelines and policies.

c) Requirements for recertification:

**RECERTIFICATION GUIDELINES
(June 2005)**

Recertification is an annual process.

The recertification is subject to an administrative fee and requires a timely submission of appropriate documentation from the candidate:

- Timely payment of the non refundable administrative fees by the candidate
- Timely submission of the required approved continued professional development activities by the candidate
- Timely submission by the candidate of documentation of confirmed participation in orthoptic practices according to the approved scope of practice
- Acceptance by the candidate of the ethical principles of the practice of orthoptics in Canada

Failure to comply with the ALL the requirements for re-certification will result in the failure of the candidate to maintain a certification status with the Canadian Orthoptic Council. Failure to maintain certification with the COC will result in the removal of the non certified orthoptist from the public list of certified orthoptists of the COC.

Orthoptists who have retained their certification but have not been working within their scope of practice for five years or more, must successfully complete (as confirmed by a certified clinical orthoptist approved by COC) a consecutive two (2) month period of retraining in a centre approved by the Admissions and Training Committee of the Canadian Orthoptic Council before returning to work within the scope of practice.

Orthoptists who have not retained their certification for five years but not more than ten years must successfully complete a consecutive two (2) month period of retraining in a centre approved by the Admissions and Training Committee of the Canadian Orthoptic Council and must complete successfully the oral/practical examination of the Canadian Orthoptic Council.

Orthoptists who have not retained their certification for more than ten years must successfully complete a consecutive six (6) month period of retraining in a centre approved by the Admissions and Training Committee of the Canadian Orthoptic Council and must complete successfully the written and the oral/practical examination of the Canadian Orthoptic Council immediately following the completion of the retraining period.