



## ADVISORY NO. AHAO-2

**[Please file in your ACO Practitioner Manual in the “Advisories” Section. Replaces Advisory AHAO-1]**

**Date: January 1, 2008**

**Subject: AFTER-HOURS AVAILABILITY  
OF OPTOMETRISTS**

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The Alberta College of Optometrists considers quality and efficiency in optometric care is best served if the optometrist who normally examines and treats the patient is available to guide the patient to the most appropriate care.

Since the physical and mental well-being of any health care practitioner would be severely affected should they be forced to provide on-call service 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, the following procedures are recommended for the purposes of after-hours availability of regulated members:

- [a] Should the regulated member be away from his/her office for an extended length of time, the member must make arrangements with other practitioners (optometrist, ophthalmologist or family physician) in their own offices, or in other offices in the general vicinity, to be available to examine patients referred from your practice who require optometric care. Obviously, these practitioners must be advised ahead of time of their responsibilities and arrangements should be made for the proper and efficient transfer of patient file information as required.

- [b] When staff or optometrists are not present at your office, the ACO considers it appropriate for practitioners to choose one (or more) of the following:
- 1) That your office telephone answering machine takes messages and that you or your staff reviews the messages on a regular basis.
  - 2) That your office telephone answering machine gives your FAX number or email address and that messages left via these forms of communication are reviewed on a regular basis.
  3. That your office telephone answering machine and/or sign on the front door of your office give the address of the nearest hospital emergency department deemed capable of providing optometric or ophthalmological care.
  4. That your office telephone answering machine and/or sign on the front door gives your home or cellular telephone number.
- [c] If the optometrist is working in an area of the province where patients do not have access to appropriate optometric or ophthalmological care on an after-hours basis, it would be appropriate for a group of several optometrists to arrange a rotating schedule regarding after-hours care for their combined patients and advise their patients accordingly.