

ADVISORY NO. TOPR-2

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

Date: January 1, 2008

**Subject: TERMINATING THE OPTOMETRIST - PATIENT
RELATIONSHIP**

One of the more interesting challenges in the professional career of any health care provider is finding the proper way to terminate a relationship with a patient. It is the opinion of the Alberta College of Optometrists that an optometrist may legally and ethically decide not to continue providing care to a patient as long as the patient is not acutely in need of immediate care and has been given reasonable notice to find another optometrist or ophthalmologist.

The following checklist is provided for an effective and proper method of ending a relationship with a patient:

- Communicate your decision clearly to the patient.
- Give your patient a reasonable time period to find another optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- Provide your patient with reasonable assistance to enable them to find another optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- Send your patient a letter (perhaps even a registered letter) confirming the termination and keep a copy of the letter in the patient’s file.
- Ensure that you have not terminated a relationship based on such grounds as age, gender, marital status, vision or medical condition, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status. Optometrists who limit their practice to a specific area of vision care (eg. contact lenses) or a specific type of patient (eg. geriatric) may terminate a relationship due to the specific limitations of their practice.
- After receiving written acceptance from the other practitioner to assume care of the patient; ensure that all parties understand that the ownership of the patient file is now the responsibility of the practitioner who has accepted care of the patient.

Your patients should also be informed in advance if your personal morality or beliefs influences the recommendation or practice of any optometric procedure that may be required.