

Code of Ethics Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Code of Ethics Guidelines is to provide additional context and information for occupational therapists to implement the Code of Ethics. It includes the following:

- Background Information
- How to Use the Code of Ethics
- How to Use the Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice
- Acknowledgements
- Glossary of Terms
- Supplementary Resources
- References
- Appendix 1: Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Saskatchewan College of Occupational Therapists (SCOT) is responsible for regulating occupational therapy practice in Saskatchewan and in doing so supports the public's right to safe, competent, and ethical care by occupational therapists. Occupational therapists registered to practice in Saskatchewan are regulated under The Occupational Therapists Act, 1997. SCOT may establish, maintain and enforce a Code of Ethics for members.

This Code of Ethics outlines the ethical responsibilities and expectations for member conduct in support of the College's mandate to promote and protect the public interest. Members are required to uphold the Code of Ethics, and failure to do so may constitute unprofessional conduct.

This iteration of the Code of Ethics emphasizes expectations for how members demonstrate their commitment to culturally safer practice, consistent with the College's commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the College's Land and Territorial Acknowledgement.

The Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice (see Appendix 1) outlines indicators of ethical practice, providing a reference to support decision-making and professional conduct.

The following table illustrates where the Code of Ethics is situated within the overall structure of legislated and other governing authorities for the practice of occupational therapy:

Document	Description
The Occupational Therapists Act, 1997	The legislation that governs the profession of occupational therapy in Saskatchewan.
The SCOT Regulatory Bylaws	The bylaws that govern the profession of occupational therapy in Saskatchewan. It outlines more detailed provisions regarding register categories, requirements for registration application and renewal, and protected title.
The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code	The Code prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area. Protected grounds are religion, religious creed, marital status, family status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age (18 or more), colour, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, race or perceived race, receipt of public assistance, and gender identity. Protected social areas are employment, education, housing, a place where goods or services are received, or facilities are used, contracts, professional trade associations, purchase of property, occupations, trade unions, and publications.
Code of Ethics	The set of values and principles that guide the conduct of occupational therapists registered to practice
Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada – ACOTRO, ACOTUP, CAOT (2021/2024)	A nationally adopted document that outlines the broad range of skills and abilities required of all occupational therapists at all stages of their career. Occupational therapists registered to practice in Canada are expected to use the competencies document to inform their practice and competence needs.
Standards of Practice	The set of regulatory requirements that define the minimum expectations for the practice of occupational therapy that result in the provision of ethical, accountable, and effective services.
Occupational Therapy Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Peoples in Canada – ACOTPA, ACOTRO, ACOTUP, CAOT, COTF, (2023)	The statement prepared to summarize the recommended actions each of the participating organizations has committed to undertake to address the articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report (TRC, 2015), and the Calls to Justice from the report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG, 2019).
Practice Guidance Documents	Practice guidance documents include Practice Statements, Practice Guidelines, and Practice Frequently Asked Questions. They are developed by the College to support members in the interpretation and application of relevant legislation, the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and the Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada (2021/2024).

Risk Determination and Mitigation

A risk-based approach allows occupational therapists to determine, prioritize, and address the most significant risks to client occupations, health, and wellness, focusing services, and decreasing overall risk to a client. Using a risk-mitigation or management approach to practicing occupational therapy is the foundation for providing safe, effective, and ethical occupational services to reduce potential harm.

Social Media, Virtual Service Provision and Generative Artificial Intelligence Usage

The use of social media, virtual care platforms, and generative artificial intelligence are growing rapidly and can enhance occupational therapy services if used responsibly and ethically.

The Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice includes ethical considerations when using social media, virtual service platforms, and artificial intelligence.

HOW TO USE THE CODE OF ETHICS

The Code of Ethics is a resource for members and others with whom they interact. For example:

Members use the Code of Ethics and the Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice to support ethical conduct and decision making. When resolving ethical issues, members consider applicable legislated and governing authority, the Competencies, the Standards of Practice, and other college guidance documents together with what they know about their own practice context (e.g., organization policies and resources, geographic location, client population, etc.) and their clients' context.

Members are responsible for their decision-making and actions and must, when requested by the College, be able to articulate their rationale for ethical decisions made. Failure to follow the Code of Ethics may be found to constitute unprofessional conduct.

The College, within its legislated mandate of serving and protecting the public interest, uses the Code of Ethics to inform members of their ethical responsibilities in daily practice. The Code of Ethics may be used in Continuing Competency Program activities, to frame responses to member questions or concerns about practice, and in addressing complaints of unprofessional conduct.

Clients and the public may refer to the Code of Ethics to gain an understanding of how their occupational therapist should be conducting themselves.

Employers or supervisors of occupational therapists can use the Code of Ethics to support or assist in the evaluation of employee conduct.

Educators and students use the Code of Ethics to inform curriculum content and student placement or entry-to-practice expectations.

Other health professionals/service providers may use the Code of Ethics to provide insight into how they can expect an occupational therapy colleague to conduct themselves.

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST: GUIDING ETHICAL PRACTICE

The Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice (see Appendix 1) outlines measurable characteristics that reflect ethical practice and serve as a tool to illustrate how these principles can be applied in practice. This resource allows users to reference these indicators to inform and guide ethical decision-making and professional conduct.

Acknowledgments

The Code of Ethics was coproduced as a template for use across Canada, in consultation and collaboration with members, college advisory committees and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) Code of Ethics working group and board.

ACOTRO respectfully acknowledges the content taken and adapted from the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (ACOT) building on the Codes of other regulatory organizations in Canada and worldwide.

Questions regarding the College's Code of Ethics and occupational therapy practice can be directed to practiceadvisor@scot.sk.ca.

GLOSSARY of TERMS¹

Accountability

Accepting full responsibility for our actions and decisions, ensuring they align with professional standards and ethical conduct.

Client

People who are receiving occupational therapy services. This may be an individual or a collective, such as a group, community, or organization.

Collaboration

Working cooperatively with colleagues, clients, and interested third parties, recognizing that diverse perspectives lead to better outcomes.

Context

Context strongly influences occupational possibilities and occupational therapy services. This document looks at three layers of context:

1. **'Micro' context:** The client's immediate environment – their own state of health and function, family and friends, and the physical environment they move through.

¹ (Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2021/2024)

2. **'Meso' context:** The policies and processes embedded in the health, education, justice, and social service systems that affect the client.
3. **'Macro' context:** The larger socioeconomic and political context around the client – social and cultural values and beliefs, laws, and public policies.

Equity

Equity and equality are distinct concepts. While equality involves providing everyone with the same resources and opportunities, equity focuses on allocating resources and opportunities according to individual circumstances to enable comparable outcomes. Adopting an equity-based approach is essential, given the persistent systemic barriers that continue to limit equal access and opportunity in our society.

Ethical Spaces

When an occupational therapist works with someone who has a different worldview, they seek to create an 'ethical' or neutral space for dialogue.

Ethics

Ethics is a system of moral principles that guide a person's decisions and behaviour.

Humility

Cultural and intellectual humility is an approach to working with people that is grounded in pursuit of common ground and mutual respect. The occupational therapist knows that they cannot fully appreciate another person's culture, and they must not assume that their own culture is superior. They listen deeply to what the client says about their life and experience. They stay open to the possibility that they might need to question their own professional knowledge and beliefs.

Indicator of Ethical Practice

An indicator of ethical practice is a quantifiable characteristic of practice that is subject to measurement and can be used to describe one or more aspects of ethical practice.

Integrity

Upholding honesty, fairness, and consistency in all professional actions, adhering to both the spirit and letter of the law.

Knowing Better and Doing Better

Strive to do your best with the knowledge and skills you currently have and commit to improving your practice as you gain new insights and understanding. Knowing better and doing better also means committing to continuous learning and improvement to ensure that our work is informed by the latest knowledge and practices, striving for excellence and competence.

Minimizing Harm

Acting thoughtfully to minimize harm, considering the impact of our decisions on individuals, communities, and society at large.

Occupational Rights

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2019) recognizes occupational rights for all people to:

- Take part in occupations that support survival, health, and well-being.

- Choose occupations without pressure or coercion, while acknowledging that with choice comes responsibility for others and for the planet.
- Freely engage in needed and chosen occupations without risk to safety, human dignity, or equity.

Privilege

In the context of equity, “privilege” refers to unquestioned and unearned advantages that people enjoy when they are members of more dominant groups in a society.

Respect

Treating everyone with dignity and fairness, recognizing and honoring cultural differences and individual experiences.

Respecting Autonomy

Honouring the right of individuals to make informed decisions by providing them with the information, support, and resources needed to act in line with their values.

Social Position and Power

The words ‘social position and power’ are used in *The Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2021/2024*, to refer to the concept of ‘positionality.’ Differences in social position and power shape personal identity and *privilege* in society.

Competent occupational therapists know how to analyze their positionality in order to act in an unjust world. This means being aware of one’s own degree of privilege based on factors such as race, class, educational attainment, and income, so as to enhance transparency and minimize the impact of potential biases.

Transparency

Foster trust by communicating openly and honestly, ensuring clarity in all professional interactions.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[Occupational Therapy Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#). Report from the Occupational Therapy Truth and Reconciliation Task Force. (ACOTPA, ACOTRO, ACOTUP, CAOT, COTF - Sep 2023)

Promoting Occupational Participation: Collaborative Relationship-focused Occupational Therapy (2022)

REFERENCES

Alliance of Canadian Occupational Therapy Professional Associations – ACOTPA Association of Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations – ACOTRO; Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs – ACOTUP; Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists – CAOT; Canadian Occupational Therapy Foundation – COTF (2023). *Occupational Therapy Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Peoples in Canada*. Retrieved September 28, 2023 from <https://caot.ca/document/8065/TRC%20Commitment%20statement%20Sept%2028%20 EN.pdf>

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APPENDIX 1: Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice

The Checklist: Guiding Ethical Practice outlines characteristics that reflect ethical practice. Though users may reference these indicators to inform ethical decision-making and professional conduct, the checklist is not exhaustive; ethical occupational therapy practice may include additional components beyond those listed, such as reflection, respect, humility, collaboration, engagement with the profession, and creating meaningful outcomes for the client.

A. Reflective Practice

Practice is reflective when the occupational therapist:

- ☐ Engages in reflective practice and continuous learning throughout their career to acquire, maintain, and enhance competence in practice.
- ☐ Provides services only in areas of competence and seeks support and additional education, training, mentorship, or supervision when a gap in competence is identified.
- ☐ Considers degree of privilege and/or experiences of oppression and how they influence the therapist-client relationship.
- ☐ Exercises independent judgment.

B. Respectful and Meaningful Practice

Practice is respectful and meaningful when the occupational therapist:

- ☐ Acknowledges and respects the rights for all people to take part in occupations that support survival, health, and well-being without risk to safety, human dignity, or equity.
- ☐ Serves the client's best interest by working in a transparent, honest manner while striving to do no harm.
- ☐ Provides occupational therapy services that uphold the dignity of each client.
- ☐ Provides services to all clients in a respectful, unbiased manner. This includes not discriminating against or refusing to provide services based on grounds protected under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.
- ☐ Seeks to create an 'ethical' or neutral space for dialogue.
- ☐ Creates and sustains practice environments that are free from discrimination or oppression.
- ☐ Provides services that incorporate equity-focused approaches.
- ☐ Respects and supports a client's autonomy to choose whether to proceed with occupational therapy services, including in situations when a client does not have the capacity to provide informed consent.
- ☐ Respects a client's autonomy to determine their own tolerance for risk in service provision.
- ☐ Incorporates risk management approaches in service provision as appropriate for the client's priorities, needs, and circumstances, and the practice situation.
- ☐ Recognizes the inherent power imbalance in the therapist-client relationship and actively

collaborates with the client and acknowledges their unique lived experience and context, supporting autonomy.

- ☐ Determines and communicates boundaries appropriate for the practice situation.
- ☐ Avoids conflicts of interest whenever possible and manages conflicts of interest that cannot be avoided.
- ☐ Implements measures that protect personal information, including ensuring these protections when utilizing artificial intelligence, social media, and virtual care tools.

C. Collaborative Practice

Practice is collaborative when the occupational therapist:

- ☐ Works collaboratively with colleagues and other key partners to promote coordination and alignment of client services.
- ☐ Provides mentorship and guidance as needed to colleagues, students, and/or persons they are responsible for supervising.
- ☐ Seeks, receives, and uses professional judgment when acting on feedback given by colleagues or others regarding the provision of occupational therapy services and/or the member's conduct.

D. Professional Practice

Practice is professional when the occupational therapist:

- ☐ Maintains a level of professional conduct that promotes the respect and integrity of the profession and sustains public confidence.
- ☐ Recognizes systems of inequity in their practice context and acts within their professional sphere of influence to:
 - (a) address and prevent racism and other forms of discrimination or oppression, and
 - (b) minimize the ecological costs of care.
- ☐ Acts transparently and with integrity in all professional and business activities (e.g., fees and billing; contracts or terms of agreement with clients or contracting organizations; advertising of professional services; use of artificial intelligence, social media, or other online platforms; response to any real or perceived conflicts of interest; etc.).
- ☐ Works effectively within the systems where occupational therapy services are provided and in relation to the policies, procedures, or processes of any funding programs accessed in the provision of services.
- ☐ Shows leadership through one or more of the following:
 - contributing to the education of students, assistants, or other system partners;
 - mentoring or educating occupational therapists;
 - engaging with professional networks or communities of practice; or
 - otherwise contributing to the occupational therapy body of knowledge.
- ☐ Engages in quality improvement activities that support the provision of quality occupational therapy services.