

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PROMOTION & MARKETING

Name:	Promotion & Marketing
Date Approved:	05/28/2008
Date Updated:	09/15/2018 02/08/2019 09/25/2019 03/05/2020 07/08/2020 09/11/2020
Number:	SP-PM-10
Type:	Practice Management Standards (PM)
Reference:	09.25.19 MOTION "To amend SP-PM-10 Promotion & Marketing to include the following statement "Free must mean free and as an example, annual eye examinations for children under the age of 18 are not "free"." For consistency of endorsed messaging approved by the SAO Council and College, please use the statement "Annual eye examinations for Saskatchewan children under the age of 18 are covered by Saskatchewan Health". CARRIED. 03.04.20 MOTION "To accept the amendments to STANDARDS OF PRACTICE SP-PM-10 Promotions & Marketing." CARRIED. 07.08.20 MOTION "To approve STANDARD OF PRACTICE SP-PM-10 Promotion & Marketing." CARRIED. 09.11.20 MOTION "To amend STANDARD OF PRACTICE SP-PM-10 Promotion & Marketing." CARRIED.

Promotion and marketing of an optometric practice is governed by the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists' Code of Ethics. This advisory is intended to assist the regulated member in the determination of appropriate behavior when contemplating any promotion or marketing of their practice.

Generally, promotion and marketing by an optometrist, or, on behalf of an optometrist:

1. Must be clear, truthful, complete, and not misleading
2. Must be dignified and in good taste
3. Must not misrepresent the effectiveness of any procedure, instrument or ophthalmic device
4. Must not claim superiority over any other optometrist
5. Must not be detrimental to the best interest of the public
6. Must not damage the integrity of the profession of optometry

Specifically, promotion and marketing by an optometrist or on behalf of an optometrist is governed as follows:

Advertising Medium

Advertising and promotion is allowed via any form of communication equally available to all optometrists.

Specialist Designation

Any claim to be or references to being a “specialist” or “specializing in” is only allowed after successful completion and verification of title by the Canadian College of Specialties (CCSO) or the American Academy of Optometry, or the College of Optometrists in Vision Development.

For those members without the designation referenced above, they may state that they have a “special interest” or a “preferred area of interest” in a particular area of optometric practice.

Listing of Optometric Services

The name of a member’s practice, services provided, and any promotional or marketing must clearly reflect the member is an optometrist and/or engaged in delivering optometric services (i.e. Dr John Smith Optometrist, John Smith OD, John Smith Doctor of Optometry).

You may list your membership in various associations, societies and colleges as follows:

- i. Dr. John Smith, OD
Member of the AAO, ACO, CAO
- ii. John Smith, B.Sc., O.D., F.A.A.O.
Member of the AAO, ACO, CAO
- iii. John Smith, B.SC., O.D., FCCSO, CCSO(S)

The SAO considers the listing of optometric services that are available at your practice to be a valid public service. The terminology used to describe these services should be consistent with generally accepted terms such as: eye examinations, eye health examinations, complete vision and eye health examinations, eye surgery consultations, contact lens fittings, complete family vision care, treatment of eye disease, on-site optical lab, large selection of designer frames, walk-in appointments welcome, evening and weekend appointments available and compliant with SAO office infection control guidelines. Other similar terms would also be acceptable.

What is not acceptable are terms that denote superiority or that are misleading such as: Computerized vision testing, advanced diagnostic, state-of-the-art, high-tech, sight saving eye exams, most up-to-date vision testing equipment in the province, expert in all areas of vision care, most experienced vision care in town, gentle eye exams, scientifically proven vision care results guaranteed, voted the best office in consumer satisfaction this year and highest standard in infection control. Again, other similar terms would also not be acceptable.

Endorsements

The SAO considers that provision of accurate product information by regulated members to their patients to be a valid public service. However, testimonials, comparatives, superlative statements or personal endorsements by optometrists or their patients are not acceptable.

Participation in Health Education and Charitable Organizations

The SAO encourages optometrists to participate in programs of health education and charitable activities offered to the public. However, regulated members should refrain from using this participation to expressly promote their practices. Optometrists are allowed to list their name on the letterhead of health or charitable organizations along with appropriate designations.

Practice Names of Regulated Members

The names of all regulated members who practice at a facility should be prominently displayed in a location where these names are visible to the public.

The name of a person who held an Annual License immediately prior to their death or relocation from practice of optometry in Saskatchewan may continue to be listed for a period not to exceed one year.

Practice Trade Names

If a trade name is used, the names of the optometrists practicing at that facility should also be listed under the trade name along with the word Optometrist(s).

Signage

The size and colour of internal and external signs should be:

- i. Compliant with your lease agreement
- ii. The same or very similar to other signs in your surrounding area
- iii. Of such a nature that your signage projects a professional image to the public

The names of members who have ceased to be licensed members of the Association shall be removed from all signage and marketing promotions within one year of their last license renewal.

Fees

Advertising of fees must be complete, truthful, and not misleading. The advertising of free or discounted eye exams cannot be offered as an enticement (i.e. only if the patient agrees to purchase some other commodity in the optometrist's office). If a free or discounted eye exam, free anti-scratch coating, etc. is offered, these services and materials must also be offered to all patients regardless of their knowledge of the particular promotion.

Free must mean free. Eye examinations are health procedures and therefore licensed optometrists may not discount. Do not use or promote annual eye examinations for children under the age of 18 are not "free". For consistency of endorsed messaging approved by the SAO Council and College, please use the statement "Annual eye examinations for Saskatchewan children under the age of 18 are covered by Saskatchewan Health".

Patients are to be informed of any fees for examination or treatment services in advance of that service being initiated. The use of a "bait and switch" tactic is strictly prohibited.

Fee Assistance or Pro Bono Service

Members shall consider contributing to the general welfare of society (improving accessibility of services, regardless of ability to pay), and/or the general welfare of their discipline, by offering a portion of their time to work for which they receive little or no financial return.

No Payment for Referral

Members shall not accept a commission, rebate, or remuneration in exchange for referring patients. Additionally, members should exercise caution and utilize professional judgment if offered gifts from other professionals/entities to whom members refer patients (see "Gifts" below). Members are advised to carefully review the Professional Bylaws CONFLICT OF INTEREST sections (9.1) to (9.11).

Gifts

Gifts from clients/patients/others are to be viewed with consideration of the services rendered, and shall not be induced or coerced. It is members' responsibility to ensure that there is no exploitive element to gift giving and receiving, and that cultural considerations are taken into account when determining whether or not to accept gifts. Members are cautioned about accepting gifts that would be viewed as excessive.