



Canadian Patient Charter for Vision Care

(Rights and Responsibilities)

Preamble

With an estimated 5.5 million Canadians living with a vision-threatening eye condition, of whom nearly 500,000 already are blind or partially sighted, vision care is an essential component of Canada's health care system.

Patients have a right to be active and informed partners in their own vision care. The Canadian Charter of Vision Care Rights and Responsibilities outlines the rights and responsibilities of patients and professionals in ensuring the highest standard of vision care is met across the country.

Prevention of vision loss

Patients have a right to:

- Receive timely access to the right eye health or vision care professional (ophthalmologist, optometrist or optician) at the right time;
- Be provided with credible information about how to maintain good vision health and recognize the signs of eye disease or vision loss and the importance of eye safety.

Patients have a responsibility to:

- Take steps to prevent vision loss wherever possible by making healthy lifestyle choices and receiving regular eye examinations per evidence-based guidelines;
- Monitor their vision and report any changes to their ophthalmologist, optometrist or optician as soon as they are noticed.

Inclusive, accessible and coordinated care

Patients have a right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect in every interaction relating to their eye health;
- Be an active partner in decision-making at every stage of their vision care experience;
- Expect a collaborative approach to care that brings together ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians and all other relevant disciplines to create a tailored, holistic plan;
- An open and inclusive care environment that takes into account the accessibility needs of people with vision loss including the formats in which information is made available;

- Have complete access to their medical records on request, with assurance their personal information will be protected from unauthorized disclosure.

Patients have a responsibility to:

- Communicate openly and honestly with their ophthalmologist, optometrist, optician, or family physician if they do not understand their vision care plan;
- Apprise their ophthalmologist, optometrist, optician or family physician of accessibility needs.

Diagnosis and treatment

Patients have a right to:

- Receive an optimum standard of care and a timely and accurate diagnosis of their eye condition by the most appropriate professional; as well as all relevant information about the eye condition, its potential impact on their vision and resources that can assist with the adjustment to vision loss, including rehabilitation therapy and mental health support;
- Make an informed consent to treatment, which includes being provided with the necessary information about potential benefits, side-effects and approved alternatives;
- Receive appropriate follow-up care and support.

Patients have a responsibility to:

- Communicate honestly with their ophthalmologist, optometrist, optician or family physician about their vision health, including visual challenges, so that the best and most appropriate care can be provided;
- To follow the prescribed treatment and self-care instructions or express concerns if they are unable to comply.

Comprehensive vision rehabilitation

Patients have a right to:

- Receive a timely referral and access to the full spectrum of care in their journey through vision loss, from an ophthalmologist's or optometrist's initial assessment to the rehabilitation professional's delivery of intensive therapy, including any required specialized training to allow them to live safely, independently and with dignity;

- Collaborate with rehabilitation professionals in the development of personalized post-vision loss rehabilitation therapy.

Patients have a responsibility to:

- Participate fully in therapeutic sessions and reinforce learned skills through ongoing practice;
- Provide a safe working environment for vision rehabilitation therapists providing training in the home.

Professional rights and responsibilities

Professionals involved in the clinical and/or rehabilitative care of a patient have the right to:

- Safe working conditions whether providing care in clinical or community-based settings;
- Resist any influence /interference that could undermine their professional integrity;
- Contribute to the advancement of the eye care and/or vision rehabilitation professions.

Professionals have the responsibility to:

- Treat patients with dignity, respect and a supportive approach;
- Provide information and care in a manner that is accessible to people with vision loss, making adaptations where needed;
- Improve models of integrated vision care to create a more seamless patient experience;
- Actively engage patients and one another to provide high-quality, personalized and coordinated approaches to care;
- Learn and apply evidence-based best practices in the provision of optimal care and/or therapy;
- Provide timely referrals for treatments and therapies, including comprehensive vision rehabilitation therapy where the patient has vision loss that places at risk their safety, mobility and/or independence.

