

## Advocating – Considerations for Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapists play a critical role in advocating for the needs of individuals and their communities. As noted in the *Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada (2021)*, occupational therapists “act on situations and systems of inequity and oppression within their spheres of influence.” All occupational therapists are expected to challenge biases and social structures that privilege or marginalize people and communities (C1.3), and to advocate for environments and policies that support sustainable occupational participation (C3.6). As such, COTNS recognizes that responsible advocacy is a fundamental aspect of client-centred practice.

As regulated healthcare professionals, occupational therapists hold a position of trust, confidence, and responsibility in society. This credibility can be leveraged to advocate more effectively. In order to maintain this credibility, occupational therapists are expected to engage in advocacy and public discourse in a way that is consistent with the fundamental values of the profession as described in the Code of Ethics: respect and trust.

Regulated professionals maintain their right to freedom of expression; however, this right is limited by their professional obligations. Occupational therapists have a duty to the public and to the profession to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with professional standards and ethics. Failing to do so creates a risk of harm to the public by undermining trust in the profession and in the ability of COTNS to regulate the profession in the public interest.

Also consider the following factors:

- Am I communicating in a way that is civil, ethical, and reflects occupational therapy values?
- Am I contributing constructively to the social discourse about an important issue by advancing a position that is informed and supported by evidence?
- Am I acting thoughtfully and intentionally, or reacting impulsively and maliciously?
- Is there a risk that this activity will result in a breach of confidentiality, transgress a professional boundary, or create a conflict of interest?
- Is there a risk that my conduct may be unlawful, or that it will encourage others to engage in unlawful conduct?

Occupational therapists must always apply critical thinking and exercise appropriate professional judgment in determining whether their conduct is appropriate. This assessment should be guided by the professional obligations described in the Code of Ethics, the Practice Standards and Practice Guidelines, and the *Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada (2021)*. Under no circumstances should advocacy impair or disrupt appropriate and safe client care.

## Occupational Therapist Practice

### New Requirements for Virtual Services across Canada

In December 2023, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia announced important changes for occupational therapists providing virtual services across provincial borders.

#### What are virtual services?

Virtual services refer to using information and communication technologies to provide occupational therapy services when clients and occupational therapists (OTs) are not together in-person.

Virtual services (also known as telepractice, remote service, online or virtual care) can include phone calls, video conferencing, or other technology-assisted formats.

Occupational therapists providing virtual services are encouraged to review and follow [ACOTRO's Position statement on Remote Practice](#).

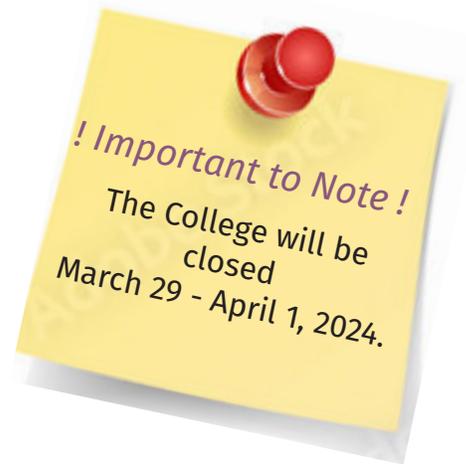
#### What became effective December 12, 2023?

Occupational therapists registered in British Columbia require registration in Nova Scotia when providing virtual services.

Providing virtual care to clients in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta (for Restricted Activities), or Quebec, occupational therapists require registration within those provinces.

More information and general requirements for each province are listed on [our website](#). For specific requirements, contact the regulatory organization for that province.

Please contact the College with any questions regarding the provision of virtual services.



## College Updates

### Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)

In November 2023, the [Regulated Health Professions Act](#) was passed by the Nova Scotia government. This act establishes a common regulatory framework among all health professions in Nova Scotia.

Health professions will migrate to the RHPA over the next three years. The College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia will transition from the *Occupational Therapist Act (1998)* to the *Regulated Health Professions Act* in 2024.

With the transition to the new Act, there will be additional Ministerial authority over health professions and the College's regulatory processes will be updated. The College is currently reviewing the impact of these changes on our current operations, and we will provide updates to registrants as this process unfolds.

The development of the College's regulations that further outline profession-specific framework for the profession is currently underway.

Please stay tuned for more information in the months ahead.

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### Renewal Time is Almost Here!

Please renew your licence between April 1st and May 15th to avoid a late fee. Email reminders will be sent from the database system when the renewal opens, then bi-weekly until you have completed your renewal.

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### Regulatory Form Requests

The College processes registrant's documentation and form requests. These requests may include LMSA transfer documents, regulatory history forms, and letters of standing. While some requests may be processed the same day, other requests may take between 2-7 business days. We ask that registrants consider these timelines when making a request.

# Forward Notice of Registration Fee Adjustment

The College is providing advance notice of changes to registration fees. This early notification is intended to ensure all our registrants have sufficient time to prepare, especially for those needing to adjust their payroll deduction settings accordingly.

We recognize that this announcement comes after a recent fee increase and understand the concerns this may raise. To mitigate the fee increase, the College will gradually introduce the registration fee increase. Current registrants will not pay this increase until the renewal for the 2025/2026 registration year (April 1, 2025). New applicants or re-registrants will see an increase this year, effective April 1, 2024.

## Why are fees increasing?

Our commitment as a health profession regulatory organization requires us to ensure appropriate resources to deliver our required regulatory functions to meet our public protection mandate. After careful consideration of all the factors involved, the College decision to increase fees was driven by the requirement to ensure that we have sufficient revenue to address these expenses.

Fee Chart	2024/2025 April 1, 2024	2025/2026 April 1, 2025
Current Registrants	\$530	\$575
New Applicants/ Re-Registrants	\$575	\$575

This increase is essential for several key reasons:

- Significant expenses are forecasted over the next two years for provincial regulatory initiatives. (Including costs associated with the transition to the *Regulated Health Professions Act*.)
- Investing in technology for service efficiency and delivery.
- Ensuring our operations' long-term sustainability to meet current and future needs.

## Are other fees increasing?

Yes, some application fees and 3-month registration licence category are also increasing. These fee increases begin on April 1, 2024.

To see a detailed list of our current and upcoming fees, please visit [our website](#).

# Payroll Deduction Program Details for 2024

The payroll deduction program is set up through registrants' employers. The employer retains a portion of the registrant's paycheck to cover the registrant's registration renewal fee. Typically, employers take payments from April to December, and remit the fee to the College in March the following year. Registrants have an opportunity to enroll in these programs once a year through their employer.

## I am not currently enrolled in the payroll deduction program:

### Nova Scotia Health Employees

If you are employed with Nova Scotia Health and wish to enroll in the payroll deduction program send your name and employee number to [krista.brien@nshealth.ca](mailto:krista.brien@nshealth.ca).

### IWK Employees

If you are employed with IWK and wish to enroll, please send your name and employee number to [Suzanne.McNamara@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:Suzanne.McNamara@iwk.nshealth.ca) by March 8, 2024.

### Another Employer

If you would like your employer to participate in the payroll deduction program, please contact your employer.

## I participated in the Payroll Deduction Program last year:

Registrants enrolled with either the IWK and Nova Scotia Health payroll deduction programs do not need to re-apply each year.

If you participated in the payroll deduction program, you are still required to complete an online licence renewal application. At the end of the application, within the payment options, there is an option called "Payroll Deduction". This will allow you to submit your renewal application without paying.

## College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia

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