



ASSOCIATION  
DES ERGOTHÉRAPEUTES  
DU N.-B.

*N.B. ASSOCIATION  
OF OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPISTS*

## New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists

### CODE OF ETHICS

#### **Purpose of the Code of Ethics**

The New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists (NBAOT) Code of Ethics outlines the values and principles intended to guide the conduct of occupational therapists in New Brunswick. It recognizes that occupational therapists have obligations and responsibilities to their clients, the profession, the public, their colleagues and themselves. Occupational therapists are committed to providing caring, competent and ethical service to their clients. The purpose of the Code is to:

- Encourage reflection and assist decision-making among occupational therapists with the expectation that the client's welfare is always the primary concern in any ethical decision;
- Provide the public, including clients, with information about the basic ethical care and service that is expected from an occupational therapist; and
- Guide the establishment of standards of practice and guidelines for regulatory responsibilities and activities.

Occupational therapists are expected to be familiar with this Code and to integrate it into their day-to-day practice. The values and expectations are not intended to be inclusive; they are general statements intended for interpretation and application in specific situations.

The NBAOT Code of Ethics should be followed in conjunction with the employer's code of ethics.

It should be noted that NBAOT has not attempted to set out specific positions regarding all ethical issues that its members may face. All value statements and responsibilities set out in the Code are equally important and are not organized hierarchically.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The NBAOT acknowledges the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC) and the College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba (COTM) for granting permission to adapt their Code of Ethics documents to meet the needs of occupational therapy practice in New Brunswick.

## **Occupational Therapy Values**

- Dignity and Worth
- Individual Autonomy
- Safe, Competent and Ethical Care
- Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Fairness
- Honesty and Transparency
- Trusting and Respectful Work Environment

### **Dignity and Worth**

Every client is unique and has intrinsic worth.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Provide service in a manner that upholds the dignity of clients;
- Respect the client's race, culture, gender, social status, language, sexual orientation, age or ability in the delivery of service;
- Respect the client's self-determination and choice;
- Assist clients to achieve optimum quality of life in all states of health;
- Recognize the power imbalance inherent in professional therapeutic relationships, and maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- Act in the best interest of the client to maintain trust, and not exploit the professional relationship for any personal, physical, emotional, financial, social or sexual gain.

### **Individual Autonomy**

Every client has the right and capacity for self-determination.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Advocate for the client's right to determine and participate in meaningful occupations for his or her health and well-being;
- Provide complete and accurate information to enable the client to make informed decisions regarding the need for, and nature of, occupational therapy service, including information about the anticipated benefits and risks of accepting or refusing such service;
- Obtain and document informed consent for occupational therapy service. Consent may be established orally or in writing. In situations where this is not possible, consent may be implied.

- Obtain informed consent for occupational therapy service provided by those under the occupational therapist's supervision, such as students and support personnel;
- Recognize client's support network, and where appropriate, include their participation in occupational therapy service;
- Inform and involve the client as much as possible in the process of giving informed consent, even if the client does not have the capacity to do so;
- Confirm the scope and authority of alternative decision makers.

### **Safe, Competent and Ethical Care**

Every client has the right to safe, competent and ethical occupational therapy service.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Practice within the scope of the profession, with knowledge of and adherence to national and provincial legislation, regulations, standards of practice and policies relevant to the practice of occupational therapy;
- Provide service in areas of professional competence and practice within the scope of their knowledge and skills;
- Regularly conduct self-assessments of their practice and participate in professional development to maintain currency and competence;
- Seek support and additional training when changing area of practice;
- Integrate current evidence-based practices relevant to occupational therapy service delivery;
- Request consultation or refer clients to colleagues or other health care professionals when such actions are in the best interest of the client;
- Strive to participate in activities that contribute to the body of knowledge and skills of the profession.

### **Accountability**

Occupational therapists are fully responsible for their practice and are obligated to account for their actions.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Act in the client's best interest and in a manner consistent with the occupational therapist's professional responsibilities;
- Retain responsibility for all occupational therapy services provided to the client by others under

their supervision;

- Limit or discontinue the provision of professional service if their physical or mental health is compromised by illness, injury or substance use that will affect their work. Where possible, occupational therapists are expected to provide the client with information regarding alternative services and assist with referrals;
- Recognize that professional obligations override management policies and take all reasonable steps to resolve situations where management policies and professional obligations are in conflict;
- Report unsafe, incompetent or unethical care, including boundary violations, to the appropriate authorities;
- Act in a manner that maintains respect for the profession and its members.

### **Confidentiality**

- Occupational therapists safeguard the confidentiality of information acquired in the context of professional relationships in order to protect their clients' rights to privacy.
- Occupational therapists are expected to:
- Comply with provincial legislation and professional regulations regarding confidentiality;
- Collect and use only information that is relevant and essential for quality service delivery;
- Take action to safeguard personal information throughout the process of collecting, recording, releasing, securing and destroying this information;
- Maintain confidentiality of client's personal information at all times;
- Share personal information with others only with the authorized consent of the client, or where failure to disclose would cause significant harm, or if legally required.

### **Fairness**

Every client has the right to quality occupational therapy service in accordance with individual needs.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Provide service to all clients in a respectful and unbiased manner regardless of race, culture, gender, social status, language, sexual orientation, age or ability;
- Advocate for sufficient human and material resources to provide safe, efficient and competent care;
- Advocate for the fair and equitable provision of occupational therapy service.

## **Honesty and Transparency**

Occupational therapists communicate openly and honestly in a clear and caring manner, and respect the client's right to comprehensive information regarding occupational therapy service.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Communicate openly and effectively in an appropriate manner with clients and colleagues, and to provide all relevant information;
- Provide qualifications and credentials to clients on request, including a means of contacting the New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists;
- Provide clients with access to their occupational therapy information in accordance with provincial legislation, professional regulations and workplace policies;
- Identify and disclose any competing interests and expectations, and in situations of real or perceived conflict of interest, take appropriate action in the best interest of the client;
- Explain to the client the nature and extent of the occupational therapist's responsibility to the fee payer;
- Use clear, accurate, and verifiable information in any advertising. This must conform to legal, social and professional norms that support the integrity and dignity of the profession.

## **Trusting and Respectful Work Environment**

Occupational therapists perform their professional duties in a manner that promotes a trusting and respectful working environment, supporting safe and competent care.

Occupational therapists are expected to:

- Provide mentorship and guidance to assist in the professional development of students;
- Promote openness and questioning, and support those who speak out in good faith;
- Respect the skills and knowledge of other team members, and seek to collaborate with them;
- Receive and act upon feedback given by colleagues regarding the provision of safe, competent and ethical care;
- Collaborate with colleagues to develop and maintain environments conducive to ethical practice.

## **Glossary**

<b>Client</b>	Individuals, families and/or groups, agencies or organizations receiving care and/or service from an occupational therapist. 'Client' is synonymous with 'patient' or 'consumer', and means a recipient of occupational therapy services.
<b>Informed consent</b>	The client's agreement to authorize occupational therapy services on a full disclosure of the facts required to make an informed decision. The obligation to obtain informed consent is a legal and professional duty.
<b>Occupational therapy service</b>	Occupational therapy service may include direct care, research, education, consultation, care coordination, program development, administration or a combination thereof.
<b>Personal information</b>	Any recorded information, collected by an occupational therapist, that would identify an individual is considered personal information in the context of occupational therapy practice.
<b>Professional boundary</b>	The limit of what constitutes appropriate professional conduct. Boundaries make relationships professional and safe for the clients.

*Established: April 5, 2014*