

Virtual Care – Update for Occupational Therapists

Effective November 1st, 2021, occupational therapists registered in other provinces who are providing virtual services to clients in Nova Scotia can do so based on their existing registration in the province they are located.

The rules for in-person services are unchanged in that occupational therapists providing in-person services to a client residing in Nova Scotia must obtain temporary or general registration in Nova Scotia.

What does this mean for occupational therapists outside Nova Scotia providing virtual services to clients in Nova Scotia?

The College is taking the position that occupational therapy service delivery occurs in the province where the occupational therapist is registered, rather than where the client resides. This means the occupational therapist must follow the rules and regulations of the province where they are registered. If a client has a complaint or concern about the service they received, they can file this with the regulatory organization where the occupational therapist is registered.

	Prior to November 1, 2021	As of November 1, 2021
Virtual services	The occupational therapist requires a temporary or full registration in the province where the client is located.	The occupational therapist requires registration in the province where they (the occupational therapist) are located.
In-person services	The occupational therapist requires a temporary or full registration in the province where the client is located.	Unchanged

Why did the College make this change?

With advances in technology, clients, occupational therapists, employers, and other stakeholders are seeking alternatives to in-person interactions. This can increase access to occupational therapy services and enables continuity of care when a client or therapist relocates. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of virtual services increased across Canada, making this change increasingly important to ensure access to occupational therapy services for clients in Nova Scotia.

Considerations when providing virtual services to clients in Nova Scotia

It is expected that occupational therapists providing virtual services to clients in Nova Scotia follow the rules of the province where they are regulated. The occupational therapist should:

- Notify the client of the location from which they are providing the service
- Only practice within the limits of the certification of registration in province where they are registered
- Ensure their liability insurance provides coverage for virtual activities
- Ensure they have adequate information about resources in the location where the client resides
- Discuss any additional risks and benefits of receiving virtual services from a different province
- Have a contingency plan should virtual services be no longer appropriate.

What if a client has concerns about the occupational therapy services they received?

Occupational therapists must abide by regulatory Code of Ethics and applicable professional standards and guidance in the province where they are regulated. If a client has concerns about the services they received, they can file a complaint with the regulatory organization where the occupational therapist is registered.

List of provincial occupational therapy regulators:

- [College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia](#)
- [Alberta College of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba](#)
- [College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario](#)
- [Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec](#)
- [College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia](#)
- [New Brunswick Association of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Therapy Board](#)
- [Prince Edward Island Occupational Therapists Registration Board](#)

What about occupational therapists registered in Nova Scotia who want to provide virtual services to clients in other provinces?

Occupational therapists should contact the regulator in the province where the client resides to confirm whether registration is required.

What about providing services to clients outside Canada?

Occupational therapists are encouraged to contact the regulatory authority in the country in which the client resides to see what is needed to practice in that jurisdiction.

For more information, please contact the Registrar – registrar@cotns.ca