



# **Prince Edward Island College of Occupational Therapists**

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## **INTERIM VIRTUAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

December 2021

Virtual practice refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for the purpose of delivering occupational therapy services when the provider and client are in different physical locations (WFOT 2014). Used appropriately, virtual practice can be a powerful tool to connect with clients.

To facilitate occupational therapy service transition to virtual practice during COVID-19, the Council has provided some interim guidelines to assist you. These interim guidelines are intended to facilitate the use of professional judgement by occupational therapists. As with any service, or method of service delivery, occupational therapists are required to exercise their judgement on a case by case basis. The occupational therapist's fundamental responsibilities to clients remain the same whether service is provided face-to-face or by virtual practice.

### **Occupational therapists:**

1. Should know and apply the legislation, standards and guidelines (if applicable) for virtual practice services within the **client's** jurisdiction;
2. Should consider if virtual practice is the most appropriate means of providing occupational therapy services, and whether there are any liability and/or risk issues to manage (i.e. is a plan in place to address adverse or unexpected events like client falls, etc.);
3. Must understand the capabilities and limitations of the chosen communication platform;
4. Must take reasonable measures to maintain confidentiality and protect personal health information when providing occupational therapy services via virtual practice;
5. Must obtain and document informed consent before initiating virtual practice services. This includes consent for occupational therapy services (assessment, treatment and consultation) and for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information as well as any limitations of the use of virtual practice;
6. Must document consent, as well as any assessment, treatment or follow-up to the same standard as if the service was carried out face to face.
7. Must establish and maintain professional standards and boundaries during virtual practice;
8. Should consider options for continuing care when the virtual practice service is discontinued;
9. Are required to uphold the PEI College of Occupational Therapists Code of Ethics; and
10. Occupational therapists must communicate all fees associated with virtual practice in advance of providing the service and document the client's acknowledgement of the fee.

These guidelines are adapted from the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia and the Newfoundland & Labrador Occupational Therapy Board. PEICOT is working towards a more comprehensive document to be available by December 2022.