



## THE ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF DISPENSING OPTICIANS

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### Opticianry

**opticianry** op-ti-cian-ry (ŏp-tīsh'ən-rē) *n.* The professional practice of filling prescriptions for ophthalmic lenses, dispensing eyeglasses, and fitting contact lenses. *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary*

Eye-care in America is similar to a three-legged stool. The first leg is comprised of **Ophthalmologists**, who are medical doctors who diagnose and treat medical conditions of the eyes. The second leg is comprised of **Optometrists**, who examine the eyes for vision defects or disorders in order to prescribe corrective lenses or other appropriate treatment. The third and final leg of the stool is comprised of **Opticians**<sup>1</sup>, who properly fit eyewear, both glasses and contact lenses, using the patient's own prescription, and providing patient education. Both Ophthalmologist and Optometrists have worked well with Opticians, supporting and complementing their individual role.

#### **Interesting Facts:**

- Eyeglasses and Contact Lenses are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") as **medical devices**.
- It is against the law (Class 2 misdemeanor) in Arizona to sell "fashion" (Decorative/Special Effect) contact lenses without a proper prescription through a licensed eye-care professional. Class 2 misdemeanor offenses are punishable with up to 4 months imprisonment. Civil penalties can include a fine up to \$1,000.00
- The **AZ State Board of Dispensing Opticians**, a "professional" board established in December 1959, by the AZ State Legislature for consumer health, safety and welfare, plays a critical role in policing the unauthorized sale of Decorative/Special Effect contacts found at convenience stores and street vendors. The Board also offers the State Practical Exam and investigates/addresses consumer complaints.
- Lenses bought without the proper fitting and instructional care that goes along with becoming a contact lens user, can lead to **corneal abrasions, ulcers, infection and ultimately vision loss**. This can happen when the curvature, and the finished surfaces, of the decorative or fashion contact lens do not match the curvature of the purchaser's eye. Who is the manufacturer responsible for the contact lens? None of that can be known without a proper prescription and fitting.
- Not all opticians are licensed. **Anyone can enter the profession working for another licensed professional, and, if they decide** to pursue licensure, **they can increase their earning potential and professional standing**. Single mothers tend to benefit from this ability the most.
- **AZ Licensure** is a multi-prong process:
  - Gain experience in an optical office/store setting; and
  - Successfully pass the written ABO (American Board of Opticians) and NCLE (National Contact Lens Examiners) exams; and
  - Pass the Practical Exam offered by the AZ State Board of Dispensing Opticians (\$100). Study materials can be rented by AADO members for \$30.00 (\$60.00 for non-members).
  - In 2013, 3,470 individuals completed the ABO examination with a 62.5% pass rate; 1,266 individuals completed the NCLE examination with a 53.5% pass rate. As of December 31, 2013, there were 29,585 ABO Certified Opticians and 10,557 NCLE Certified Contact Lens Technicians.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dispensing optician" means any person, except as provided in section 32-1691, who dispenses lenses, contact lenses, frames, artificial eyes, optical devices, appurtenances thereto or parts thereof to the intended wearer on written prescription from a duly licensed physician or optometrist, and in accordance with such prescription interprets, measures, adapts, fits or adjusts the same for the aid or correction of visual or ocular anomalies of the human eye or who duplicates, replaces, reproduces or repeats the same without prescription when there is no change in refractive value, provided that contact lenses shall never be dispensed without a written contact lens prescription being on file in any optical establishment, office of an optometrist or office of a physician or verbal confirmation of that written prescription. The dispensing optician shall advise the intended wearer at the time that contact lenses are delivered to return to the prescribing physician or optometrist for evaluation and follow-up care. ARS §32-1671(3).

## Classifications and Descriptions of Opticians

### 1. Ophthalmic Optician

Ophthalmic – That which pertains to the eye.

Ophthalmic Lens – A lens or system to be worn before or on the eye.

#### **(Post-Licensure)**

- A. AZ Licensed (Ophthalmic) Dispensing Optician (aka LDO) – One who is skilled in the interpretation of a doctors ophthalmic prescription. Is schooled or trained in the manufacture and dispensing of eyeglasses, contact lenses and other visual optical aids and equipment. (See: AZ 32-1683 Qualifications).

#### **(Pre-Licensure)**

- B. Non-Licensed (Ophthalmic) Optician – One who sells and dispenses eyeglasses. A non-licensed optician works under the supervision of a licensed optician, optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- C. Ophthalmic Manufacturing Optician/Technician – One who works in an ophthalmic laboratory manufacturing eyeglasses or contact lenses.

### 2. Scientific Optician

Scientific – That which pertains to scientific lens systems.

Scientific Optician – One who makes and adjusts other optical aids and systems including telescope optics and microscope lenses. (i.e.: University of Arizona (U of A) telescope large lens lab).

## Licensing - State and National

1. *AZ State licensing requirements.* There is a requirement to work in an optical setting for a specified period of time. It is all laid out in this link: <https://do.az.gov/licensing>. There are licensing requirements for individuals and establishments. In September, 28 applicants successfully passed the practical licensing exam.
2. *AZ State License Renewal and Continuing Education*
  - a. License renewal - Annually at a fee of \$100.00/year
  - b. Continuing Education – Every three (3) years. Each licensee shall submit documentation to the Board verifying that the licensee has completed 12 hours or more of continuing education, within each three-year period. Of the twelve hours of continuing education, each licensee shall obtain at least:
    - i. Four hours in eyeglass fitting and dispensing; (ABO)
    - ii. Three hours in contact lens fitting and dispensing; (NCLE)
    - iii. One hour in state or national opticianry standards.
    - iv. \*(plus four other hours for a total of 12 hours)
3. *National Certification with the AMERICAN BOARD OF OPTICIANRY/NATIONAL CONTACT LENS EXAMINERS (ABO-NCLE)* is a little bit more complicated because they have two levels, Basic and Advanced. Essentially, renewals are as follows:
  - a. ABO - \$125 every three years
  - b. NCLE - \$125 every three years

#### *For those renewing their certification that expires in 2018 and beyond:*

- a. ABO Certified: Send in 12 ABO- and/or NCLE-approved CECs (of which at least 6 hours are ABO-approved Technical CECs; the remainder can be either ABO- and/or NCLE-approved Technical or General Knowledge) and the \$125 fee.
- b. NCLE Certified: Send in 18 NCLE- and/or ABO-approved CECs (of which at least 9 hours are NCLE-approved Technical CECs; the remainder can be either ABO- and/or NCLE-approved Technical or General Knowledge) and the \$125 fee.
- c. ABO and NCLE (Joint) Certified: Send in 21 ABO- and/or NCLE-approved CECs (of which at least 5 hours are ABO-approved Technical CECs and 6 hours are NCLE-Approved Technical CECs; the remainder can be either ABO- and/or NCLE-approved Technical or General Knowledge) plus the \$250 fee.

#### Acceptable Continuing Education Credit:

ABO: Spectacle related courses approved by ABO with an assigned course number.

NCLE: Contact lens related courses approved by NCLE with an assigned course number.

#### d. **Alternate Renewal Methods\***

- i. ABO: You may submit proof of a **current license in a licensing state** requiring Continuing Education.
- ii. NCLE: You may submit proof of a **current license in a licensing state** requiring Continuing Education.