

CONSULTATION – DRAFT TELEHEALTH STANDARDS

Released: 3 February 2022

Submissions Due: 20 March 2022

Introduction and background

- 1 The principal purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act of 2003 (the Act) is to protect public health and safety by ensuring that health practitioners are fit and competent to practise their professions. In accordance with this, one of the functions of the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board), under section 118 of the Act, is to set standards to be observed by Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians in practising their professions competently.
- 2 Standards set by the Board are the *minimum* standards that the public and professions expect an Optometrist or Dispensing Optician to meet and are developed in consultation with these groups as well as other relevant stakeholders. They should be used by practitioners to monitor and reflect on their conduct and practice, and that of their colleagues, and by the public, as a guide for assessing the *minimum* standard to expect of their practitioner and when there may have been a departure from these. They may also be relied upon in other contexts such as employment disputes, Court or disciplinary proceedings as a measure by which an Optometrist or Dispensing Optician can be held to.
- 3 Digital technologies have become an essential part of health care. Telehealth can increase convenience for patients, enable more comprehensive delivery of services, particularly after-hours, provide access, or more timely access, to care during times of limitation, i.e., during pandemics, and can facilitate more effective use of limited health resources.
- 4 The draft *Telehealth standards* (**Appendix 1**) sets out the standard expected of Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians when providing telehealth services to members of the public and replaces the Board's previous *Statement on Internet Medicine (2019)* which was in much need of updating.
- 5 The draft *Telehealth standards* should be read in conjunction with the Board's *Statement on internet and electronic communication (2019)* (**Appendix 2**). We realise that the Telehealth space have changed significantly, particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic, and this statement will also be updated as part of this process.

How to have your say

- 6 Practitioners, stakeholders and members of the public are invited to make submissions on the draft *Telehealth standards (Appendix 1)*, before it is finalised and adopted by the Board. If you wish to make a submission, please provide this in writing **by 11.59 pm on 20 March 2022**. The Board does not guarantee that submissions received at the Board's offices after that date will be considered.

Submissions can be sent to:

The Registrar
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board
PO Box 9644
Wellington 6141

Email: registrar@odob.health.nz