



Alberta College of Occupational Therapists

Council Meeting Minutes

April 20, 2024

Attending:

Jennifer Lee – President, Regulated Member
Arwen Caines – Vice President, Regulated Member
Carrie Hait – Councillor, Regulated Member
Heidi Knupp – Regulated Member
Joyce Vayalumkal – Councillor, Regulated Member
Kristin Ward – Councillor, Regulated Member
Dennis Fitzgerald – Councillor, Public Member
Christie Bergman – Councillor, Public Member

Marianne Baird – CEO and Registrar
Benny Mutoni – Recording Secretary

Voting Today – Dennis, Christie, Carrie & Kristin

1) GATHERING

Council confirmed there was quorum in attendance, and with two Public Members available for voting there will be two occupational therapist (OT) members of Council voting. Jennifer called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. A roundtable was held to check-in with all attending.

2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

With no suggested changes to the agenda, Council brought forward a motion.

MOTION: To approve the April 20, 2024, ACOT Council meeting agenda as presented - Christie (MOVED) Carrie (SECONDED). CARRIED.

3) STRATEGIC PLANNING

Update on Strategic Plan

Marianne reported the following:

- ACOT's social media subscriber volume is small but continues to grow monthly.



- ACOT continues to foster relationships with key partners and is waiting to hear back from government about feedback on our refreshed Standards of Practice (SoP) and Code of Ethics (CoE).

Review of Action Items

Examples of action items completed included:

- Success of the fee increase as an incentive for earlier registration.
- ACOT's Council Charter has been updated and will be signed by all Councillors present today.
- ACOT's key partner analysis has been updated based on the additions suggested at our prior Council meeting.

Practice Inquiries Activity

Marianne reported the following:

- Our registration and our continuing competence queries both had a big jump, which is expected during the registration renewal period.
- For practice queries, ethical scenarios continue to be a hot topic along with informed consent, private practice, general key partner inquiries, and registrant inquiries.

Q: Will you see any value in compiling questions and answers to some of these common inquiries somewhere for OTs to access?

A: Yes, this is something we can implement this year and send out in communications such as the e-news.

Q: Do we know what the year-to-year numbers are like? If we wanted to know if there was a big change from last year's period to this year's registration?

A: It's consistently higher volume for this reporting period each year, it won't be exactly the same volume each year, but it will be close, especially during renewal in January and February when it gets busy.

MOTION: To approve the strategic plan, action items, and practice inquiries reports as presented - Dennis (MOVED) Carrie (SECONDED). CARRIED.

Generative Thinking - Sample Diagnosis Survey Questions, Sample September Open Forum Diagnosis Questions

Marianne provided a brief background on the diagnosis topic and brought focus to the plain language description of diagnosis on a draft survey and the survey questions for review by Council.

Council members recommended revising the format to make it easier for participants to navigate, by only expanding further question options when a person selects yes for the first question in a group of questions.

Marianne then shared sample questions for the open forum for review.

A comprehensive discussion unfolded regarding the role of OTs and the potential challenges associated with their involvement in diagnosis. Several key points emerged including:

- The need to gather as much information as possible from OTs in Alberta.
- The importance of a commitment to thorough planning and preparation before sending out information on diagnosis to registrants.
- Delving into the scope of practice for OTs, there was a collective interest in understanding the breadth of diagnoses they can perform within the profession.

Throughout the dialogue, an emphasis was placed on thoughtful consideration, protecting the public, and strategic planning to navigate the complexities surrounding OTs and diagnosis.

ACTIONS: Marianne to call for 20 OT volunteers to refine the draft diagnosis survey in May, bring the refined survey back to the May Council meeting for review, then Council will determine whether we need to bring in other professions such as physios, speech language pathologists, nurses and psychologists to provide additional input either before or after the survey goes out to all OT registrants .

4) COMMITTEE REPORTS

Governance Committee

Arwen provided an update on recent discussions regarding the attendance requirements for Council members. It was noted that during the revision of the bylaws, the specifics regarding Council member attendance were left out, leaving a gap within current documents. To address this, the Committee proposed incorporating attendance expectations into the Councillor handbook and the Council Code of Conduct.

It was suggested that Council members be required to attend a minimum of 80% of Council meetings held between September and June each year. In instances where a Council member anticipates an absence, it was recommended that they submit their input on discussion points before the meeting they will be missing to ensure their input is still considered during the meeting.

Arwen raised questions for further consideration by the council:

- 1) Firstly, there was a query regarding the delineation between excused and unexcused absences, prompting a discussion on defining the boundaries for each category.
- 2) Secondly, the council sought clarification on which reasons for absence would be considered as counting towards the 80% attendance requirement and which would not.
- 3) Lastly, there was a suggestion to explore the need for stipulating potential consequences for failure to meet attendance expectations.

Q: What is the process when a Public Member has a serious problem or issue with attendance during their term?

A: We alert Alberta Health, and it goes to the Minister for consideration.

Q: Is there a requirement for minimum attendance for in person versus virtual?

A: No, we're looking at attendances no matter what platform. As long as we see your face or have seen you participate in some fashion, it counts as attendance.

Q: Do we need to articulate absence reasons?

A: No, we do not need to know the reason.

A Council member added support for the attendance percentage and potential consequences, while also leaving room for privacy boundaries to be respected when there are genuine personal reasons for an absence. Another Council member supported this while adding that there should be flexibility in both attendance and language (i.e., *expected* instead of *required*) used when life happens.

Potential consequences would be at the discretion of the President and Executive with a range of repercussions such as a discussion with the Councillor, up to a complaint to Alberta Health Minister's office about a Public Member with continued absences, or possible removal from Council for a regulated member of Council. Wording to be added to the Council Procedures Manual: Councillors are expected to attend 80% of council meetings throughout the year (i.e., September to June). If a Councillor has a known absence, it is asked that they submit thoughts on the discussion points prior to the scheduled meetings. This way the Councillor's thoughts can be brought forward for further discussion and consideration during generative thinking and discussion. If 20% of meetings are missed, a discussion with the President will occur in regard to consideration for future steps including or up to removal from Council for regulated members and a complaint to Alberta Health for public members.

MOTION: To approve changes as submitted by the Governance Committee - Dennis (MOVED) Carrie (SECONDED). CARRIED.

Competence Committee

Heidi provided an update on the recent activities of the Competence Committee reporting that the Committee convened twice, once in January and again the previous week, to initiate training and the assignment process for review and evaluations of continuing competence program submissions. The review and evaluation process will take place in spring and early summer.

Acting Against Racism and Intolerance (AARI) Committee

Jennifer provided an update on the ongoing activities of the Committee, emphasizing their commitment to aligning their work with the AARI Final Report recommendations. A key plan arising from this was the decision to re-run the AARI survey conducted in 2021 to gauge perceptions and issues related to AARI

work. In their most recent meeting, the Committee provided suggestions for refining the survey's content and messaging.

Jennifer reported that this resulted in the identification of two main deliverables: Firstly, the Committee is tasked with rerunning the survey with potential adjustments to better capture relevant insights.

Secondly, AARI Committee updated their terms of reference, incorporating input from both the Committee members and council, to ensure alignment with current priorities and objectives.

MOTION: To approve all Committee reports as presented - Carrie (MOVED) Christie (SECONDED).
CARRIED.

5) OPEN FORUM

Marianne welcomed participants to the open forum and invited participants and Council to introduce themselves. Marianne also shared the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT) 's regrets as they had a workshop occurring at time of the Council open forum.

Marianne then opened the floor for Monique Lizon representing the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) to share updates on their advocacy efforts.

CAOT Updates:

- I. Launch of commitment statement to Indigenous peoples in Canada, aimed at advancing reconciliation efforts, with ongoing work on an action plan to ensure progress. Progress on this will be reported at the upcoming CAOT conference.
- II. Focus on Jordan's Principle and Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) challenges, including delays in funding applications and increased demand for urgent needs like food and housing, prompting ongoing dialogue with officials to address concerns.
- III. Introduction of the Joint Position Statement on Equity and Social Accountability, to be soft launched at the CAOT conference, with continued efforts to develop resources supporting its implementation post-conference.
- IV. Release of a position statement on occupational therapy's role in preventing and supporting recovery from suicide, highlighting the profession's public health approach and outlining actionable recommendations.
- V. Advocacy efforts including meetings with government representatives to advocate for recognition of OT's role in mental health and proposed the ability for OTs to complete the mental health portion of the disability tax credit forms.
- VI. Continued advocacy through the "Ask for OT" campaign, targeting insurance companies, unions, and top employers to advocate for OT coverage across Canada, including efforts to collaborate with other professions and coalitions.
- VII. Dissatisfaction over OT's exclusion from changes to the student loan forgiveness program, prompting ongoing advocacy efforts and meetings with government officials to address the decision-making process.

- VIII. Advocacy efforts directed towards changes in eligibility and funding for home modifications, with a focus on targeting the government and exploring policy tools such as tax credits.
- IX. Submission of an opioids brief to government, advocating for the role of OT in managing chronic pain, with a strategic decision to submit a brief rather than pursue witness status due to the politicized nature of the topic.

Q: Do you have a summary of the Jordan's Principle information that you have, such as the results of talking with the OTs across Canada?

A: Yes, it was in our recent OT weekly edition, about two weeks ago, but one thing that we are working on with Jordan's principle is an FAQ document because again we get a lot of questions from our membership. We want to build out frequently asked questions as a best practice document.

ACOT Updates:

- I. Submission of refreshed standards of practice and code of ethics to the government in spring 2023, aligning with ACOT's obligations under Bill 46. The refresh incorporates new OT Competencies for Canada, including an equity-based focus, and integrates recommendations from the Acting Against Racism Intolerance (AARI) Final Report.
- II. Acknowledgement of the collaborative effort involving OTs from across the province in drafting the documents, with anticipation for news alerts regarding the finalized documents once they are back from government and approved by the ACOT Council.
- III. Introduction of an additional standard titled "Acting to Address and Prevent Indigenous Specific Racism," recently published on the ACOT website. Encouragement for stakeholders to visit the Standards of Practice Refresh section to access the new standard and participate in a survey, open until April 22nd, to provide feedback.

Marianne brought up the question of preferred method of accessing ACOT news content offering examples such as email, website, in-person, and online sessions. The floor was opened for questions and discussions.

Multiple ways of educating people were suggested as the best option with forum participants citing the different ways people absorb information and showing support for continued email, website and newsletter methods. One participant noted that in-person sessions may be difficult to attend due to issues such as location and schedule conflicts.

Marianne asked participants to share insights into the various pressures experienced in their OT roles, highlighting widespread feelings of being stretched.

Some of the issues raised were regarding organizational restructuring and additional work demands, as well as insufficient communication and control over restructuring decisions at some of the organizations. This created further discussion on the evolving landscape of pediatric community rehab services in Alberta with a notable increase in requests for services from families of school-aged children, often stemming from unmet needs within the school system. There was emphasis on the importance of collaborative efforts and creative problem-solving amidst resource constraints to keep in mind serving

the Alberta public.

Another participant working in home care highlighted inconsistencies in support for equipment needed by clients, citing examples such as funding reductions that have resulted in increased pressure on seniors and challenges in accessing essential supplies, particularly in smaller communities where resources are limited.

Participants also highlighted the challenge of showcasing the value of OTs within healthcare, despite their diverse skills and leadership roles, notably during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. They emphasized OTs' capacity to independently plan treatments holistically. Additionally, there was discussion about the importance of OTs communicating their value more effectively, similar to marketing strategies used in other fields, to gain increased understanding and support from stakeholders and the public.

A participant also expressed concern about potential legal repercussions if new diversity and inclusion standards were not met. Marianne explained that in most cases, the college would first look at informal steps for resolution when appropriate, typically involving discussions and a commitment to learn from events and make changes before more formal steps would be taken. Marianne and Jennifer emphasized the importance of communicating this process to ensure understanding among registrants.

Marianne thanked the participants for joining the open forum and encouraged future participation.

6) CONSENT ITEMS

Review Last Meeting's Minutes

Council examined the March 25, 2024, ACOT Council Meeting Minutes and requested adjustments:

Update Page 3, last paragraph - to say, "if funding becomes available, ACOT could use it to update its database."

MOTION: To approve the March 25, 2024, ACOT Council Meeting Minutes with discussed adjustments - Carrie (MOVED) Dennis (SECONDED). CARRIED.

RL 2: Finances

At a minimum, every five years ACOT must select an accounting firm to complete its annual external audits. KBH Chartered Professional Accountants provided this service last year and will continue into this year.

RL 2.1: 2023-2024 Q4 Budget vs Actual

Comments on the 2023-2024 fourth quarter (Q4) Budget vs Actual included:

- Registration and banking revenue were both higher than forecasted. It was not necessary to pull funds from the reserves.
- Most College activity expenses were lower than budgeted for, except for investigation complaints and legal costs for hearings.

A Councillor asked about the possibility of individual costs rising, such as legal fees and consultant fees, given the adjustments in budgeting for the upcoming period. In response, Marianne stated that the legal budget had been adjusted to accommodate more complex cases expected. She also noted that while consultant and insurance fees could potentially increase due to overall rising costs, no significant percentage increases for legal costs are expected.

MOTION: To approve RL 2: Finances and RL 2.1: 2023-2024 Q4 Budget vs Actual as presented - Dennis (MOVED) Carrie (SECONDED). CARRIED.

Annual Report 1st Draft

Marianne noted the following:

- Highlighting members' titles to be added for consistency i.e., regulated and public members.
- Formatting to be updated for completed report.
- On page 10, figures to be verified are highlighted.

Q: What percentage of solo practitioners did we have last year compared to this year? It looks like to me from my memory, it's significantly going up.

Marianne: Group professional practice clinic went up, went from 10.0% to 10.3% and solo professional practice clinic went from 8.08% to 8.2%.

A Councillor suggested a series of informative videos to help OTs understand their practice classification better. Marianne was welcoming of the idea and suggested pairing it up with a series of "frequently asked questions" videos already in the works.

ACTIONS: Create a video series on practice area and practice setting classifications. Add a video clip about private practice including just a few clients off the side of your desk.

7) REFLECTION ON GOVERNANCE

Council provided their input on whether the Ends Policy was met during this meeting:

- Stimulating conversations with fresh perspectives on diagnosis.
- We continue to work towards good quality regulation.
- We stayed productive and respectful of time.
- Council is continually striving to make sure that we are maintaining this privilege of being a regulatory body.
- A lot of topics were covered while keeping the public in mind.

- Fluidity of discussion re-visiting previous topics and progressing forward.
- Good direction for the survey and questions that go with it.

8) MEETING SURVEY

Council then took four minutes to complete the Council Meeting Survey.

9) IN CAMERA

Council agreed to move into an in-camera session.

MOTION: To take the April 20, 2024, Council meeting to in-camera session - Kristin (MOVED) Dennis (SECONDED). CARRIED.

MOTION: To adjourn the April 20, 2024, Council meeting - Dennis (MOVED) Carrie (SECONDED). CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.