WEALTHCARE FINANCIALS

Protecting Optometry Practice Income: A Lending Guide for Healthcare Bankers

Why Income Protection Matters in Optometry Lending

When a banker structures a loan for an optometrist — whether for practice acquisition, equipment financing, or real estate — the repayment model rests on one foundational assumption: the doctor continues to work. Understanding how your borrower's income is protected is sound due diligence, not a sales exercise.

According to the Social Security Administration, a working person has roughly a 1-in-4 chance of experiencing a disability before retirement. For a solo or small-group optometrist, a months-long absence from the exam lane can translate directly into a disruption in cash flow — and in debt service. Yet data from the 14th Annual Guardian Workplace Benefits Study (2025) found that only 43% of working Americans owned disability insurance that year, suggesting meaningful gaps remain even among professional borrowers.

What Optometry Practices Look Like From a Credit Perspective

Optometry practices often blend clinical revenue with optical retail, creating a revenue mix that can look attractive on a P&L. However, much of that revenue is still tied to the presence of a licensed OD. When evaluating creditworthiness or monitoring an existing relationship, lenders should consider whether the borrowing doctor has income-protection coverage in place — and whether that coverage is structured appropriately for a professional with a specialized skill set.

Key Coverage Concepts to Understand

- Own-occupation definition: Some disability policies define disability broadly, requiring that a claimant be unable to work in any occupation. A policy with an own-occupation definition, by contrast, may pay benefits if the insured cannot perform the specific duties of their occupation — in this case, optometry — even if they could theoretically work in another capacity. This distinction can matter significantly for a specialist.
- Noncancelable and guaranteed renewable: These contract features, when present, mean the insurer cannot cancel coverage or raise premiums as long as the insured continues to pay them. For a borrower with a long loan term, policy stability is worth noting.
- Benefit period and elimination period: Longer benefit periods (to age 65, for example) and shorter elimination periods may offer more comprehensive protection, though they also affect premium. Shorter benefit periods may leave gaps in longer-term loan obligations.

A Practical Conversation for Lenders

Referring borrowers to a specialist in physician and professional disability planning is one way lenders can add value without stepping outside their lane. An independent advisor who works regularly with healthcare professionals can help the borrower assess whether existing coverage aligns with their current practice structure and loan obligations.

How Wealthcare Financials Can Support Your Borrowers

Wealthcare Financials, an agency of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, works with healthcare professionals across specialties to evaluate disability income protection needs. Founded in 2019 by Kris Schwartz — who brings experience from both the technology sector and financial services — the practice maintains relationships with more than 40 carriers, allowing for a thorough review of available options rather than a single-carrier recommendation.

If you have optometry clients who may benefit from a coverage review, a referral conversation is straightforward. The goal is simply to ensure the income that supports their loan also has a plan behind it.

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