

Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapy is a health profession concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation. Occupational therapists have expertise in the area of occupational performance. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the occupations which give meaning and purpose to their lives. They work to maximize productivity, reduce lifestyle restrictions and avoidable dependency by enabling individuals, groups and communities to identify, engage in and achieve desired potential in the occupations of life.

Occupational therapists have a broad education that provides them with the skills and knowledge to work collaboratively with people of all ages and abilities that experience obstacles to participation. These obstacles may result from a change in function (thinking, doing, feeling) because of illness or disability, and/or barriers in the social, institutional or and physical environment.

Occupational therapists use a systematic approach based on evidence and professional reasoning to enable individuals, groups and communities to develop the means and opportunities to identify, engage in and improve their function in the occupations of life. The process involves assessment, intervention and evaluation of the client related to occupational performance in self-care, work, study, and leisure. Occupational therapists may assume different roles such as advising on health risks in the workplace, safe driving for older adults, and programs to promote mental health for youth. Occupational therapists also perform functions as manager, researcher, program developer or educator in addition to the direct delivery of professional services.

Occupational therapists are generally employed in community agencies, health care organizations, schools, social agencies, industry or are self-employed. The majority of occupational therapists are employed in a wide range of publicly funded health organizations including home and community care, hospitals, rehabilitation centres and long-term care facilities. Approximately 25% of occupational therapists are self-employed in the privately funded system.

Occupational therapists are graduates of accredited university programs in Canada. Licensure or registration by provincial regulatory boards is required in all ten provinces and in Quebec, membership with the professional corporation for occupational therapists is mandatory.

Adapted from CAOT Position Statement on Everyday Occupations and Health, 2003 (<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=699>).

For more information, visit the websites listed below:

Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Occupational Therapists - www.nlaot.ca

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists - www.caot.ca

World Federation of Occupational Therapists - www.wfot.org.au

National Occupation Classification 2006 –
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Welcome.aspx>