
The Importance of Occupational Therapy Assistant Education to the Profession

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) recognizes the value, necessity, and viability of occupational therapy assistant (OTA) education at the associate degree and certificate levels. Occupational therapy assistants are collaborative partners in the profession's pursuit to achieve its *Centennial Vision*. OTA education provides a sound foundation for practice for the development of competent skill sets to fulfill various professional roles. These roles include direct client care, collaboration with all levels of practice, and advocacy in both traditional and non-traditional care settings.

Meeting the *Centennial Vision* relies on the profession to help enable people "to improve their physical and mental health, secure well-being, and enjoy higher quality of life" (AOTA, 2007, p. 613). OTA education provides the knowledge base for occupational therapy assistant practitioners to successfully provide occupation-based intervention across the life span and the skills to promote healthy occupational choices in the communities they serve. The collaboration of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants in service delivery ensures greater affordability and accessibility of occupational therapy services for all populations so that more of society's occupational needs can be met effectively.

In addition, meeting the *Centennial Vision* relies on the profession's ability to "ensure a diverse workforce for multiple roles" (AOTA, 2007, p. 613). OTA programs are designed to meet the needs of a diverse student body, which often are representative of the surrounding community in which the graduates ultimately become employed and serve. OTA graduates are poised to practice within the challenges of traditional and emerging areas of practice with an entrepreneurial spirit that further augments the *Centennial Vision* statement.

OTA education cultivates leadership and mentorship skills in students, preparing them to assume leadership roles within the profession and their communities. OTA education includes the dissemination of knowledge and development of skills needed for occupational therapy assistant practitioners to participate in research and scientific inquiry. Collaboration in research aids the profession in its efforts to be science-driven and promotes the wider use of evidence-based practice in traditional and emerging areas of practice.

The Commission on Education recognizes that OTA education adds an important and valued dimension to the provision of occupational therapy services. The Commission on Education is committed to the support of OTA education by seeking role clarification and promoting collaboration between associate degree/certificate and professional levels of education in occupational therapy to ensure the profession meets the *Centennial Vision* and society's occupational needs.

Reference

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2007). AOTA's *Centennial Vision* and executive summary. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 61*, 613–614.

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