# WHY BE INVOLVED? WHAT DO MY STATE ASSOCIATION & AOTA DO FOR ME?

Why be involved? Who has the time or money to do it? Isn't being a member enough? The answer may be yes, if that is all you can do at this time. But if you can do more and just don't know how to go about starting, the following information should help.

For many years occupational therapy practitioners have voiced feelings of being disenfranchised with both their state OT association and with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) for many reasons. A common refrain is "What do they do for me?" Well the answer is too long to include here, however there are some major areas that both state OT associations and AOTA provide for members and the profession as a whole. Major areas include the following:

- SECURING OUR FUTURE with high-level lobbying nationally in Washington and locally; ongoing advocacy work in state capitals and with policymakers across the country
- PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS, and assuring greater PUBLIC AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION FOR OT through targeted campaigns and enhanced consumer outreach
- THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO ENSURE YOUR LIFELONG LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, including increased funding for training and research that demonstrates the effectiveness of OT services; promoting evidence-based practice; providing strong publications and innovative continuing education to support your licensure renewal requirements and your professional excellence

At times it may seem overwhelming to do anything other than be a member and just live your busy life. But all too often we just don't know the facts. It can be easier than you think to get involved. Contacting occupational therapy practitioners who serve on state OT associations or AOTA commissions, committees, and boards can help clarify questions you may have.

#### TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT:

#### **INFORMAL:**

- Voting for officers of you local or state association
- Voting for officers for national association
- Informing your state representative regarding your concerns
- Responding for requests for feedback
- Keeping informed of current issues

#### FORMAL:

- Attending local & state OT association meetings
- Informing your state representative of your desire to volunteer
- Responding to the "Call for Volunteers"
- Serving on a committee and helping at conference
- Submitting a proposal or "Call for Paper" to make a presentation
- Running for local or state office

### ❖ Where do I start?

o It's often easiest to start locally with something that you are interested in. Choose a position or activity that you feel comfortable with and dive in! You could even start within your work environment. Think about getting involved in fieldwork education and sign-up for the fieldwork listserv/forum.

- Some additional first starts could be to: Speak to your local special interest section, study group or district within your state. Serve as a mentor to other occupational therapy assistants and share your expertise. Start a study group for occupational therapy assistants within your community. Promote occupational therapy within your community at school fairs, special events, etc.
- Next, consider running for a position locally within your state association or look at being the representative to the AOTA Representative Assembly from your state. These elected positions are a nice introduction to the national level while staying involved with your state association.

# How do I know if they need an occupational therapy practitioner to serve on a commission, committee or board?

- Read the state association newsletter, or check your state association Web site. Sign up for your state listserv. Often the positions that are needed are advertised in these ways.
- Check the AOTA Web site and read your AOTA literature (OT Practice, AJOT, 1-Minute Update, Special Interest Section Quarterlies) and the AOTA listservs/forums. All open or requested positions are sent through these sources.

# How do I know if I have the qualifications to serve on a commission, committee or board?

 Look at the qualifications they are looking for regarding that specific position. If you are unsure, contact one of the members to discuss their needs and then apply for the position!

## **❖** Can I receive continuing education credit for my leadership/volunteer roles?

Yes, NBCOT awards PDU units for volunteer positions, here are a few.

NBCOT Professional Development Activities	NBCOT-PDU Value	Max Units	Audit Document
Volunteering for an organization, population, or individual that adds to the overall development of one's practice roles.	5 Hours = 1 Units	18 for OT Role or 18 units for professional role	Verification of hours via letter from organization or a report describing the hours and outcomes of services provided and a completed NBCOT Volunteer Service form
Making professional presentations at state, national or international workshops, seminars, and conferences	1 Hour = 2 Unit	36 for OT Role or 18 units for professional role	Copy of presentation or program listing
Serving as adjunct faculty teaching OT related academic course per semester (must not be primary employment role; one-time presentation per topic; time spent on preparation cannot be included).	1 Credit Hour = 6 Units	36 for OT Role or 18 units for professional role	Date, lecture/academic course title, name of institution, letter from instructor re: time spent, goals and objectives

 In addition, check your state OT regulations regarding CE requirements many states allow some credit for OT-related leadership/volunteer activities.

Black, T. & Eberhardt (Eds.) 2005. *The Occupational Therapy Assistant: Resources for Practice and Education*. Bethesda, MD: American Occupational Therapy Association.

NBCOT Professional Development Activities Chart Retrieved 4/13/09 from NBCOT Web site <a href="http://www.nbcot.org/WebArticles/articlefiles/55-PDUActivityChart\_2009.pdf">http://www.nbcot.org/WebArticles/articlefiles/55-PDUActivityChart\_2009.pdf</a>