

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 14, 2006

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TENNESSEE REFINES SCOPE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE

Revisions to State Law Based On AOTA National Standards

(Bethesda, MD)—The state of Tennessee has made important revisions to its code defining the scope of occupational therapy practice. The Occupational Therapy Practice Act has been updated to adequately reflect the broad array of services that occupational therapists now provide for consumers.

“Tennessee consumers are the real winners here,” said Sandy Fletchall, OTR/L, CHT, MPA, FAOTA, and Tennessee Occupational Therapy Association president. “The skills and services that occupational therapists provide have grown tremendously. Our practitioners help consumers function with low vision problems, autism, and aging, just to name a few. A statute that reflects these changes will help consumers get the services they need.”

Revised provisions codify into the statute services that occupational therapy practitioners were providing and include the following:

- Drivers’ instructions for the physically impaired.
- The provision that patients may receive occupational therapy for the purpose of wound management, such as recovering mobility after a burn.

Other provisions provide that the state licensing board may now identify and implement specific requirements for occupational therapists to supervise occupational therapy assistants; the previous statute let some long-term-care facilities provide inadequate staffing for therapy services.

“These changes will bring us in line with national standards outlined by the American Occupational Therapy Association,” added Fletchall. “By using AOTA’s contemporary definition of occupational therapy as a template, we were able to suggest revisions that will increase positive outcomes for Tennessee consumers.”

(MORE)

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About the American Occupational Therapy Association

Founded in 1917, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is the nationally recognized professional association of approximately 35,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students of occupational therapy. AOTA advances the quality, availability, use, and support of occupational therapy through advocacy, education, and research on behalf of its members and the public. For more information, visit us on the Web at www.aota.org.

About Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is a proven, recognized therapy that enables people to overcome the disabling effects of mental, physical, developmental, and emotional conditions by helping improve their ability to perform tasks in their living and working environments. Practitioners work with individuals to improve their basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, and also to compensate for permanent loss of function. The goal of occupational therapy is to help individuals lead independent, productive, and satisfying lives through participation.

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