

Challenges and Opportunities for Children and Youth With an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

This document identifies three challenges often encountered by occupational therapy practitioners working with children and youth with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and offers tools and resources available through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) that may help to meet these challenges. This is a working document. The information provided below is not all-inclusive, nor is it arranged in any particular order.

1 CHALLENGE: Occupational therapy's role in serving students with autism in the schools is not fully understood or used.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Advocate

- Conduct a staff in-service using the powerpoint on school-based practice, which can be downloaded from <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/School/41768.aspx?FT=.pdf>.
- Share the "Tips for Educators," which reviews how occupational therapy practitioners support educators as well as students with autism. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/MH/Tip-Sheet.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Distribute copies of the Fact Sheet entitled "Occupational Therapy in School Settings." <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/School/School.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Promote occupational therapy's role in inclusion by sharing the Fact Sheet on Universal Design for Learning. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/School/Rtl/UDL.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Share the AOTA Fact Sheet on Autism. <http://aota.org/Consumers/Professionals/WhatsOT/CY/Fact-Sheets/38517.aspx?FT=.pdf>

Refer to AOTA Official Documents

- Refer to the Official Document entitled "Occupational Therapy Services in Early Childhood and School-based Settings," especially chart on pages 5 and 7. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Highlights/40881.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Refer to the Official Document entitled "The Scope of Occupational Therapy Services for Individuals With an Autism Spectrum Disorder Across the LifeCourse." <http://www.aota.org/practitioners/official/statements/40880.aspx?ft=.pdf>

Provide occupation- and evidence-based practice

- Use your full scope of practice by addressing non-academic outcomes that lead to school success, including social participation and mental health. Some tools that may help include:
 - Fact Sheet on School Mental Health <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/MH/School-MH.aspx?FT=.pdf>
 - FAQ on School Mental Health <http://www.aota.org/practitioners/practiceareas/pediatrics/browse/mh/faqschoolmh.aspx?ft=.pdf>
- Promote occupational therapy's role in addressing positive transition outcomes for future community living, employment, and post-secondary educational plans and goals.
 - Go to the AOTA transition Web site link: <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/Transitions.aspx>
 - Share the AOTA Transition Fact Sheet <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/Transitions/Transitions.aspx?FT=.pdf>
 - Refer to the AOTA FAQ on Transitions <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/Transitions/41879.aspx?FT=.pdf>
 - Share the AOTA Fact Sheet on Facilitating Employment of Individuals With Developmental Disabilities. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Work/Fact-Sheets/DD.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Refer to the evidence-based review of interventions for autism used in or of relevance to OT. <http://www1.aota.org/ajot/abstract.asp?IVol=62&INum=4&ArtID=6&Date=July/August%202008>
- Refer to the AOTA *Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Children and Adolescents with Autism*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=843&SKU=2212

Learn More

- Enroll in the self-paced clinical course, *Collaborating for Student Success*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&SKU=3023
- Enroll in the CEonCD™ *Autism Topics Part II: Occupational Therapy Service Provision in an Educational Context*, available late fall 2011. <http://www.aota.org/practitioners/profdev/CE.aspx>
- Enroll in the self-paced clinical course, *Mental Health Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention With Children and Youth: A Guiding Framework for Occupational Therapy*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=65413407&SKU=3030
- Enroll in the online course, *Occupational Therapy in School-Based Practice: Contemporary Issues and Trends: Autism and Related Disabilities: Considerations for Occupational Therapy in the School Setting (Session 3)*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?Type=D&SKU=olsb3

2

CHALLENGE:

Sensory challenges affect participation of children and youth with an ASD across contexts.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Advocate

- Refer to the AOTA autism microsite. <http://aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/Autism.aspx>
- Review the AOTA FAQ on Autism. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/MH/Autism.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Conduct an in-service using the powerpoint entitled Sensory Integration: An Approach to OT Intervention. If you work in an educational context it may be helpful to bundle this with the powerpoint on OT role in schools that was offered in Challenge 1. <http://aota.org/practitioners/practiceareas/pediatrics/browse/si/si-intervention.aspx?ft=.pdf>
- Share the AOTA Fact Sheet entitled “Addressing Sensory Integration Across the Lifespan Through Occupational Therapy.” <http://aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/SI/Fact-Sheet.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Share the AOTA FAQ about Ayres Sensory Integration®. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/SI/Ayres.aspx?FT=.pdf>

Refer to AOTA Official Documents

- Review the Official Document entitled “Providing Occupational Therapy Using Sensory Integration Theory and Methods in School-Based Practice.” Review the case examples for help. <http://aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/SI/40879.aspx?FT=.pdf>

Provide occupation- and evidence-based practice:

- Refer to evidence-based practice by accessing the AOTA sensory integration evidence-based review. <http://www.aota.org/educate/research/catsandcaps/si.aspx>
- Refer to the AOTA *Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Children and Adolescents With Challenges in Sensory Processing and Sensory Integration*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=65386695&SKU=2218
- Read AOTA’s letter of response to the National Standards Report. <http://www.aota.org/Educate/Research-Advocacy/2009-Statements/Standards.aspx>
- Address all areas of occupation such as feeding, eating, toileting, and dressing that affect participation. Refer to Pediatric Virtual Chats on “Mealtime and Feeding Issues for Children With an ASD.” <http://www.talkshoe.com/tc/73733>

Learn More

- Refer to AOTA continuing education products on sensory processing disorders. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=720&SKU=OL2024
- Apply sensory integration principles when appropriate. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=321&SKU=4808
- Enroll in the CEonCD™, *Autism Topics Part I: Relationship Building, Evaluation Strategies, and Sensory Integration and Praxis*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=80314372&SKU=4848
- Enroll in the CEonCD™, *Autism Topics Part III: Addressing Play and Playfulness in Evaluation and Intervention*, available Winter 2012. <http://www.aota.org/practitioners/profdev/CE.aspx>
- Refer to the AOTA book: *Autism: A Comprehensive OT Approach, 3rd edition*. http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=977&SKU=1213B

3

CHALLENGE:

Workload including clients with an ASD is rising.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Advocate

- Review resources offered on the Web site of the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education & Related Services, which lists specific information about occupational therapy. www.Specializedshortages.org

Refer to AOTA Documents

- Review the AOTA Fact Sheet, “Transforming Caseload to Workload in School-Based and Early Intervention Occupational Therapy Services,” and conduct a workload analysis. <http://aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/School/Rtl/38519.aspx?FT=.pdf>
- Refer to the AOTA Official Document, the “Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process, 2nd Edition,” and use language for promoting occupational therapy’s role in serving individual students, groups, and populations. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/Official/Guidelines/41089.aspx?FT=.pdf>

Provide occupation- and evidence-based practice

- Review different service delivery models in school-based practice. *Occupational Therapy Services for Children and Youth Under IDEA, 3rd Edition* http://myaota.aota.org/shop_aota/prodview.aspx?TYPE=D&PID=618&SKU=1177A
- Refer to the school-based practice area of the Children and Youth page of the AOTA Web site. <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/PracticeAreas/Pediatrics/Browse/School.aspx>

Learn more

- Listen to the Pediatric Virtual Chat on personnel shortages held on November 29, 2011. www.talkshoe.com/tc/73733
- Dialogue with colleagues on the Autism Forum on OT Connections. <http://otconnections.aota.org/forums/4780.aspx>
- Attend the AOTA Autism West Conference, or listen to recorded sessions. <http://www.aota.org/ConfandEvents/Autism-West.aspx>