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AOTA Standards for Continuing Competence

Continuing competence is a process involving the examination of current competence and the development of capacity for the future. It is a component of ongoing professional development and lifelong learning. Continuing competence is a dynamic, multidimensional process in which the occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant develop and maintain the knowledge, performance skills, interpersonal abilities, critical reasoning, and ethical reasoning skills necessary to perform current and future roles and responsibilities within the profession. Continuing competence is maintained through self-assessment of the practitioner's capacities in the core of occupational therapy, which reflects the knowledge of the domain of the profession and the process used in service delivery.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants use these standards to assess, maintain, and document continuing competence. Basic to these standards is the belief that all occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants share core values and knowledge guiding actions within their roles and responsibilities. The core of occupational therapy involves an understanding of occupation and purposeful activities and their influence on human performance. The unique "contribution of occupational therapy is the application of core values, knowledge, and skills to assist clients (people, organizations, and populations) to engage in everyday activities or occupations that they want and need to do in a manner that supports health and participation." (AOTA, 2007)

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Standard 1. Knowledge

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall demonstrate understanding and comprehension of the information required for the multiple roles and responsibilities they assume. The individual must demonstrate

- mastery of the core of occupational therapy as it is applied in the multiple responsibilities assumed;
- expertise associated with primary responsibilities;
- integration of relevant evidence, literature, and epidemiological data related to primary responsibilities and to the consumer population(s) served;
- integration of current Association documents and legislative, legal, and regulatory issues into practice; and
- the ability to anticipate how new knowledge is necessary to meet client needs.

Standard 2. Critical Reasoning

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall employ reasoning processes to make sound judgments and decisions. The individual must demonstrate

- deductive and inductive reasoning in making decisions specific to roles and responsibilities;
- problem-solving skills necessary to carry out responsibilities;
- the ability to analyze occupational performance as influenced by environmental factors;
- the ability to reflect on one's own practice;
- management and synthesis of information from a variety of sources in support of making decisions;

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- application of evidence, research findings, and outcome data in making decisions; and
- the ability assess previous assumptions against new evidence and revise decision making process.

Standard 3. Interpersonal Skills

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall develop and maintain their professional relationships with others within the context of their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate

- use of effective communication methods that match the abilities, personal factors, learning styles, and therapeutic needs of consumers and others;
- effective interaction with people from diverse backgrounds;
- use of feedback from clients, supervisors, and colleagues to modify one's professional behavior;
- collaboration with clients, and professionals to attain optimal consumer outcomes;
- the ability to develop and sustain team relationships to meet identified outcomes; and
- the ability to develop, sustain and refine team relationships to meet identified outcomes.

Standard 4. Performance Skills

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall demonstrate the expertise, aptitudes, proficiencies, and abilities to competently fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate expertise in

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- practice grounded in the core of occupational therapy;
- the therapeutic use of self, the therapeutic use of occupations and activities, the consultation process, and the education process to bring about change;
- integrating current practice techniques and technologies;
- updating performance based on current evidence-based literature with consideration given to client desires and practitioner judgment; and
- quality improvement processes that prevent practice error and optimize client outcomes.

Standard 5. Ethical Practice

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants shall identify, analyze, and clarify ethical issues or dilemmas to make responsible decisions within the changing context of their roles and responsibilities. The individual must demonstrate in practice

- understanding and adherence to the profession's Code of Ethics, other relevant codes of ethics, and applicable laws and regulations;
- the use of ethical principles and the profession's core values to understand complex situations; and
- the integrity to make and defend decisions based on ethical reasoning.
- integration of varying perspectives in the ethics of clinical practice

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