

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 3, 2009

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RECEIVING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BROUGHT BEFORE SUPREME COURT

AOTA Contributes Information about the Important Role Occupational Therapy Plays

Bethesda, MD — The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), in coordination with The Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Children's Law Center of the University of Richmond School of Law, Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee, Easter Seals of Northern Ohio, Inc., Parentadvocates.org, and Parents for Autistic Children's Education, submitted an **amici brief** and respondent's brief about the right of a child with autism to receive occupational therapy services in a public school system, in support of *Jacob Winkelman, et al., v. Parma City School District* asking for U.S. Supreme Court review. **A team of attorneys at Troutman Sanders, LLP wrote the briefs**, which were submitted on May 29, 2009, on behalf of the amici. The Court deliberates over the summer about which cases it will hear in the October session.

"This is an opportunity to bring attention to the appropriate use of occupational therapy services in schools and as an intervention for children with autism," said Christina A. Metzler, chief public affairs officer at AOTA. "The American Occupational Therapy Association is extremely supportive of the Supreme Court taking on the issues raised by this case."

This case addresses the school district's provision of occupational therapy to the student, Jacob Winkelman, and how an individualized education program (IEP) can be interpreted. The Court's decision in this case will impact how a free and appropriate education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is determined and implemented. Occupational therapy services for students with special needs are determined through the IEP process.

Occupational therapy practitioners can help students succeed in academic performance and social participation and are an important member of an education team that includes educators, school counselors and other specialized instructional support personnel. Occupational therapy practitioners use their unique expertise to help children with and without disabilities be prepared for and perform important learning and school-related activities to fulfill their role as students.

They also support the development of the IEP by helping to determine the services, supports, modifications and accommodations that are necessary for the student to achieve these goals. Occupational therapy practitioners assess students to determine their abilities, strengths and needs and collaborate with other members of the education team to identify a student's annual measurable goals.

"The team develops realistic, achievable, outcome-based, individualized goals for the student and identifies the appropriate team members to provide the service to achieve the established goals. The parent is an important member of the team," said Sandra Schefkind, MS, OTR/L, pediatric coordinator at AOTA.

Founded in 1917, the **American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)** represents the professional interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA's major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to www.aota.org.