
AOTA's Societal Statement on Family Caregivers

Caregiving is often a desired and rewarding occupation. Sometimes caregiving needs occur unexpectedly. Whether planned or unexpected, the extent and need for caregiving for others changes over time, affecting the structure and priorities of engagement in daily occupations. Depending on individual circumstances, these life changes may be associated with health risks for the caregivers themselves.

It has been well documented that family caregivers (unpaid family and friends who are assisting loved ones) often experience negative health effects as a result of their efforts (Centers for Disease Control, 2005; Evercare & National Alliance for Caregiving, 2006). This not only affects their own well-being but can affect their ability to continue to provide care. Many areas of caregiver concern have been identified, including issues of life imbalance, stress, depression, and the need for training in task performance (National Alliance for Caregiving & AARP, 2004). Occupational therapy practitioners can help ensure a healthy balance and support caregivers who experience sudden or long-term changes in their lifestyle and priorities and assist caregivers who may be at risk for negative health consequences.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants bring broad expertise to intervene with family caregivers to facilitate caregiving and promote better health because of their knowledge and skills in addressing the physical, psychosocial, cognitive, sensory, and contextual elements that affect participation and engagement in everyday life activities (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2005). AOTA supports recognition of families and caregivers across the life span, including research, education, advocacy, and resource allocation, consistent with the *Core Values* (AOTA, 1993) and the *Code of Ethics* (AOTA, 2005) for the profession of occupational therapy.

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