



## **AOTA APPROVED PROVIDER PROGRAM**

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Approved Provider Program (APP) enables providers of continuing education to demonstrate their ability to meet established AOTA criteria and guidelines for the development and delivery of continuing education (CE) activities relevant and meaningful to occupational therapy. Only AOTA Approved Providers are authorized to assign AOTA continuing education units (CEUs) to continuing education activities that they offer.

Organizations that become AOTA Approved Providers send a strong message about the commitment they are willing to make in meeting the needs of occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants for ongoing learning and professional development.

### **MISSION & PURPOSE**

The mission of AOTA is to advance the quality, availability, use, and support of occupational therapy through standard setting, advocacy, education, and research on behalf of its members and the public. One of the primary objectives of AOTA is to promote high professional standards and the continuing competence of occupational therapy practitioners throughout their careers. Toward that end, AOTA has developed the AOTA Approved Provider Program.

The purpose of the AOTA APP is to promote the quality and integrity of continuing education activities offered to occupational therapy practitioners by various providers and to assist in the identification of those activities that are relevant to the foundation and/or practice of occupational therapy.

### **THE AOTA CEU**

The continuing education unit (CEU) is a standard unit of measurement for participation in a continuing education activity. One generic CEU is defined as 10 contact (clock) hours of participation in an organized continuing education activity, excluding meals and breaks. One clock hour is 60 minutes.

AOTA CEUs are awarded for activities offered by continuing education providers approved through AOTA's APP. These providers must be able to ensure that the activities to which they assign AOTA CEUs not only meet the standards of time measurement for the generic CEU, but also meet the AOTA APP criteria and are relevant to the foundation and/or practice of occupational therapy.

### **THE AOTA APP PROCESS: Ensuring Relevance to Occupational Therapy**

The AOTA APP is a voluntary application and review program available to providers of continuing education. It is based on criteria and guidelines established by AOTA that promote relevance of continuing education for occupational therapy practitioners.

Although individual programs themselves are not reviewed, all AOTA Approved Providers are required to submit full course information at least 14 days in advance for every continuing education activity to which AOTA CEUs are assigned. The information will be made available to state regulatory bodies that formally recognize AOTA Approved Providers and is also used for internal auditing purposes by AOTA. In addition, providers may choose to make course information available automatically to practitioners through AOTA's searchable course database, **CE WebFind**.

### **AOTA CLASSIFICATION CODES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

In order to assign AOTA CEUs to a continuing education activity, Providers must ensure that the content of each activity falls within at least one area of the *AOTA Classification Codes for Continuing Education Activities*. The AOTA codes for continuing education consist of three categories: Domain of OT, Occupational Therapy Process, and Professional Issues. They are based in large part on the contents

found in *The Reference Manual of the Official Documents of the AOTA, Inc.*, a collection of documents that reflects

- standards established by the Association for Practice, Continuing Competence, and Education;
- the Code of Ethics for the profession;
- the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework; and
- official guidelines, position papers, and statements by AOTA related to various occupational therapy practice and professional issues.

Applicants must have a copy of *The Reference Manual of Official Documents* (product #1580) at the time of application. This may be purchased through the AOTA Online Store ([www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)) or by calling 877-404-AOTA.

## **PROMOTIONAL REQUIREMENTS & USE OF LOGO**

Providers who are approved by AOTA to assign AOTA CEUs may use the Approved Provider logo and statement only in those marketing or promotional materials for continuing education activities to which AOTA CEUs are awarded. The logo and statement must be used without any modifications. Providers may not identify themselves as AOTA Approved Providers in promotional materials for any continuing education activity to which AOTA CEUs are not awarded.

## **BENEFITS**

As the Approved Provider Program develops, is refined, and grows, providers will find that so too do the benefits of approval. Current benefits include:

- Recognition throughout the profession as a quality continuing education provider
- Increasing acceptance of courses by state regulatory bodies for licensure renewal. The number of state regulatory boards that formally pre-approve courses by AOTA Approved Providers is growing, and we will continue to work to extend our reach in more states.
- Free basic course listings on AOTA's high-traffic Web site
- Highlighted designation in printed AOTA publications for paid advertisers
- Authorization to use the AOTA APP logo in promotional materials for heightened visibility

## **REVIEW CYCLE & FEES**

Provider initial approval is granted for a period of 4 years for an organization that successfully meets the established AOTA APP criteria; after a 4-Year Renewal, providers are approved for 5 years. A nonrefundable application fee of \$550 is due at the time of application.

Once approved, providers pay an annual fee of \$385. The initial annual fee is due within 30 days of receiving Approved Provider status and will be prorated based on the date a provider's application is approved. Thereafter, the annual fee is due by October 1. A fee of \$35 is assessed for each month the annual fee is late.

Approved Providers will be able to offer AOTA CEUs for a period of 4 years, after which time they will go through a re-approval process. A nonrefundable 4-year renewal fee of \$435 is due at the time of 4-year renewal submission.

## **APP Frequently Asked Questions**

*How long does the application process take?*

The time it takes to complete the application varies based on each organization and its current operational structure and practices. The application itself, while comprehensive, does not require anything that would not already be included as part of a good continuing education program. Sometimes it's simply a matter of framing and formalizing practices already in place. Once we receive the application, you should expect to hear from AOTA within 8–12 weeks regarding the **status of the review**. Any additional information or clarifications required will increase the time until approval. Providers have 45 days to respond to a clarification request. If subsequent clarifications are needed, Providers have 30 days

to respond. Late responses may result in termination of the review process by AOTA and the applicant will need to re-apply if they wish to become an AOTA Approved Provider.

*Is there a way to "hurry" the application process?*

Yes. A complete, comprehensive application when submitted will assure a faster approval process. In addition, AOTA now has an 'expedited review' process. AOTA's Approved Provider program ensures that an expedited application is reviewed and a response is sent to the applicant within three weeks of application receipt date. Any subsequent reviews of clarification materials are reviewed in 2 weeks. An expedited application will get through the application review process within 3-6 weeks depending on the quality of the application. If an applicant selects an expedited review, no guarantee is made regarding date of Approval, as length of time varies depending on the quality and thoroughness of the application. The expedited review application fee is \$1,500.00.

Expedited Reviews will not be accepted two weeks before and during the AOTA annual conference each year (April 14 - 17, 2011) and between December 15th and January 1st.

*Can we offer AOTA CEUs once we have submitted our application?*

No. AOTA CEUs may only be awarded for courses that are offered *after* a provider has been approved and may not be granted retroactively. Therefore, organizations should not use statements such as "ABC Company has applied to become an AOTA Approved Provider" in promotional materials or handouts for courses offered prior to approval since this can be interpreted by participants to imply that a course may be eligible to receive AOTA CEUs.

*Will I have to continue to have my courses approved by regulatory bodies?*

Courses offered by AOTA Approved Providers are accepted by NBCOT for practitioners who choose to renew their NBCOT certification. AOTA has also continued to work with state occupational therapy regulatory bodies about including specific language that recognizes courses by AOTA Approved Providers in their licensure laws and regulations. Until we have written acknowledgement from those states that have continuing education requirements, organizations should continue to seek acceptance for individual courses they offer if preapproval is a requirement of the state.

As of April 2009, 25 states recognize AOTA Approved Providers, either in regulatory language or by formal written communication to AOTA: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

*For more information or questions regarding the application process, contact AOTA:*

Email: [APP@aota.org](mailto:APP@aota.org)

Phone: 301-652-6611 x2834  
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