



Resources for students
from The American
Occupational Therapy Association

Your career in Occupational Therapy

Workforce Trends in Occupational Therapy

The demand for occupational therapy services is strong. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projected employment of both occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to increase by 27% or more between 2004 and 2014. This projection is based on the Bureau's assumptions that demographic trends and advances in medical technology will fuel demand for therapy services.

Occupational therapy workforce shortages are appearing in selected markets and sectors. The American Hospital Association's Commission on Workforce for Hospitals and Health Systems found in a 2002 report that hospitals were experiencing shortages in occupational therapy personnel. Demand for occupational therapy services in early intervention programs and in schools for children with disabilities served under the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Act remains strong. Newly emerging areas of practice for occupational therapists related to the needs of an aging population are increasing demand for services. These include low-vision rehabilitation; treatment of Alzheimer's disease, and other forms of dementia, including caregiver training; older driver safety and rehabilitation; assisted living; and home safety and home modification to enable "aging in place." Based on a January 2006 survey of education program directors, 99% of occupational therapy and 94% of occupational therapy assistant graduates were able to secure jobs within 8 weeks of graduation.

Current Workforce

Based on 2006 survey results from state occupational therapy regulatory boards, American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) staff estimates the current active occupational therapy workforce to be roughly 118,500 practitioners. This includes approxi-

mately 90,500 occupational therapists and 28,000 occupational therapy assistants.

Recent AOTA surveys indicate that 95% of practitioners are female, more than three quarters (78%) are employed full-time in the profession, and the median level of professional experience is 13 years.

Data from the 2006 AOTA Workforce Study indicate a median annual income of \$58,000 for occupational therapists and \$38,000 for occupational therapy assistants.

In addition, the study indicated average entry-level salaries of \$46,300 for occupational therapists and \$33,800 for occupational therapy assistants. Recent indications of plentiful job advertisements and frequent sign-on bonuses suggest that those entry-level salaries have risen and that applicants are receiving multiple job offers.

Occupational therapy practitioners work in a wide range of settings including schools, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health, outpatient rehabilitation clinics, psychiatric facilities, and community health programs. School systems, hospitals, and long-term-care facilities are the primary work settings for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

Licensure and Regulation

The practice of occupational therapy is regulated in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The most common and highest form of regulation is licensure. Licensure is required in 49 of those jurisdictions for occupational therapists and 46 jurisdictions for occupational therapy assistants. Colorado and Hawaii do not regulate occupational therapy assistants but do regulate occupational therapists (registration law in Hawaii and trademark law in Colorado).

If you have specific questions about a career in occupational therapy, please contact educate@aota.org.

Visit www.aota.org for more information about the profession and the activities of the American Occupational Therapy Association.



The American Occupational Therapy Association



The Occupational Therapy Workforce (2006)

Who They Are...

- 90,500 Occupational Therapists
- 28,000 Occupational Therapy Assistants
- 118,500 Total Practitioner Workforce

Where They Work...

- 29.6% Schools
- 23.0% Hospitals
- 17.0% Nursing Facilities
- 10.6% Outpatient
- 6.9% Home Health
- 5.7% Academic
- 3.6% Behavioral Health
- 3.4% Community/Other

(ATA Workforce Study, 2006)

