The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.
APPROVED PROVIDER PROGRAM

AOTA APPROVED PROVIDER PROGRAM:
CRITERIA & GUIDELINES

ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

1. IDENTITY & STRUCTURE

Criteria: The Provider must have an identifiable continuing education entity or group with assigned responsibility for administering continuing education (CE) activities.

Guidelines:
Providers who are eligible to award the AOTA CEU will have a well-defined organizational structure in which the authority and responsibility for administering continuing education activities is assigned to a particular entity or group that can ensure that each of the AOTA CEU criteria are met. Individuals who are sole proprietors are also considered an entity.

Large, complex Providers whose continuing education is conducted by various parts of the organization may apply for AOTA Approved Provider status as a whole if all continuing education activities fall under the auspices of a single entity or group. The specific divisions, departments, colleges, or units that are responsible for various continuing education activities may choose to submit individual applications for approval.

The Provider's continuing education group or entity is clearly identified within the organizational structure. The activities of the group/entity must support the organization's mission. This support must be evidenced by the group/entity's own mission statement or similar document that defines the group/entity's responsibilities.

2. RESPONSIBILITY & CONTROL

Criteria: The Provider, through its continuing education entity or group, has a review process that ensures that the AOTA CEU criteria are met.

Guidelines: Internal policies should clearly show the continuing education entity has authority and responsibility to establish and implement review procedures that ensure continuing education activities meet current AOTA CEU criteria.

The Provider must designate one person from the organization as the AOTA CE Administrator who is responsible for ensuring that all AOTA CEU criteria are followed. The person designated by the Provider as the AOTA CE Administrator must be qualified by experience and training to ensure that all requirements and procedures are followed.

If the designated CE Administrator is not an occupational therapy practitioner, the Provider must identify a system for ensuring that an occupational therapy practitioner serves as a consultant to the Provider in all levels of program development, planning, and implementation for each activity to which the Provider assigns AOTA CEUs. The OT Consultant and the Provider must sign and date the OT Consultant Agreement (additional responsibilities can be added by the provider) and submit to AOTA.

AOTA OT Consultant Agreement

The OT Consultant serves an important role in ensuring that continuing education activities awarding AOTA CEUs are specifically relevant to occupational therapy practice. If a continuing education activity is available to a general audience of health practitioners and does not address and contextualize the relevance of that content to OT practitioners, the activity should not be awarded AOTA CEUs.

The OT Consultant agrees to perform the following tasks for any learning activity that is awarded AOTA CEUs:

- Identify or assist in identifying at least 1 and up to 3 appropriate AOTA Classification Codes for each CE activity indicating the relevance to occupational therapy.
- Review CE activities in terms of their relevance to OT and evidence-based foundation, including course description, learning outcomes, target audience, educational level, in-depth course outline, and any additional information needed to determine if the course should be awarded AOTA CEUs.
- Ensure that each learning activity addresses OT relevance by using one or more of the following methods:
  - Require presenters to address relevance to OT within the presentation.
  - Ask learners to identify how they will utilize the new knowledge and skills within their OT practice on the learner evaluation survey.
  - Incorporate discussion groups, case examples, homework, or similar structured activities that facilitate incorporation of knowledge and skills in OT relevant practice.
  - Discuss or demonstrate the unique/specific contribution of occupational therapy.
  - Employ meaningful methods that facilitate reflection and integration of the material within the appropriate scope of OT practice.
- Be involved in planning and development of future courses that are targeted for OT practitioners.
- Review course evaluations and tests from OT practitioners to determine if each course is meeting the needs of OT learners and provide recommendations for improvement to the provider.
- Assist in needs assessment methods, implementation, and review of findings as it pertains to OT practitioners.

ADMINISTRATIVE CRITERIA

3. SYSTEM FOR AWARDING AOTA CEUS

Criteria: The Provider has a system in place to identify learners who meet requirements for satisfactory completion of a learning activity.

Guidelines:

- One (1) AOTA CEU is the equivalent of ten (10) contact (clock) hours, excluding meals, breaks, or other non-educational time. The smallest increment that can be assigned to a course is point one (.1) AOTA CEU or 1 hour (60 minutes).
- Calculate CEUs using the following 2-step formula:
  1. Contact Hours = $\frac{\text{(total minutes for learning activity—meals, breaks, other non-educational time)}}{\text{60 minutes}}$
  2. CEUs = $\frac{\text{contact hours}}{\text{10 hours}}$

- Total CEUs awarded must be in full- or half-hour increments (e.g., 11.5 contact hours/1.15 CEUs, not 11.25 contact hours/1.125 CEUs).
- When CE activities are time controlled by the provider (e.g., live courses and webinars) or if providers use established reliable and valid methods for calculating actual time for a learning activity, the credits issued must be based on the time equivalent. For independent studies and online courses without a valid method of measurement, the provider must conduct a pilot study averaging the completion times of 5 to 10 learners. Pilot participants must be from the target audience and keep accurate records of time spent in the activity. CEUs may be awarded to the pilot participants.
- Satisfactory completion requirements are established prior to the beginning of the activity.
- Requirements for performance levels should be based on the intended learning outcomes.
- When attendance is part of the satisfactory completion, attendance requirements should be established and documented through sign-in/out sheets or other methods for tracking attendance.
- Providers must have policies on cancellation by the provider, cancellation by the learner, and complaint resolution. Learners must have access to the cancellation policies prior to registration.
- Learners must be informed of completion requirements prior to registration for the learning activity, and that only those who meet satisfactory completion requirements will earn AOTA CEUs.
- A designated official of the continuing education or training entity/group verifies and reports that each learner has or has not met the specified requirements for satisfactory completion and is or is not awarded AOTA CEU credit.
- When partial credit is awarded to learners who do not complete an entire activity, the Provider has a system to track, calculate, and award variable credit.
- The Provider has a process for calculating the AOTA CEU, which includes the provision that there be no retroactive granting of the AOTA CEU (i.e., before the Provider was approved).
- If units other than AOTA CEUs are awarded, the process will include a conversion formula or explanation, so that the equivalent AOTA CEU can be determined.
- Permanent individual records are established indicating the number of AOTA CEUs awarded to each learner.
- Only learners who successfully complete an activity are awarded AOTA CEUs.
- Certificates or letters of completion accurately reflect course and learner information, including provider name, address and/or website, course title, date, and location, learner name, speaker name (if one or two speakers), credits awarded, name, title, and signature of provider CE representative, AOTA APP logo, provider number, and statement (all provided after approval).

4. MAINTENANCE AND AVAILABILITY OF RECORDS

Criteria: The Provider maintains a complete, permanent (at least 7 years) record of each learner's participation and can provide a copy of that record on request.

Guidelines: The Provider is responsible for maintaining permanent records of all AOTA CEUs earned and must have a written policy on retaining and releasing such records that ensures the privacy and security of its learners' records. The Provider is expected to maintain a permanent record for each learner who successfully completes an activity and to record the number of AOTA CEUs earned. Cumulative records of all AOTA CEUs earned are to be available for a minimum of 7 years and are to be used as an official permanent record on request by the learner. Policies must include verification of learner identity when replacement records are requested and ensure that the learner has agreed to the release of any information.

The permanent record may be maintained by the Provider or a contracted service; however, the Provider bears primary responsibility for maintenance and availability of permanent records.

A permanent record is an official cumulative record or file issued by the Approved Provider that documents an individual's participation in the Approved Provider's continuing education activities. This individual record should include:

- Provider name and address
- Learner name
- Activity title
- Type of activity (e.g., workshop, online course, self-study)
- Start and completion date(s) of the activity
- Number of AOTA CEUs awarded
- Instructor(s) name(s) and credentials
- Additional information, such as current address, telephone number, and assessment scores, may be included at the option of the Provider.

The permanent record may be a computer-generated, typed, or handwritten listing or may consist of a cumulative file of activity completion documents that can be reproduced at the learner's request.

Learners must be made aware of AOTA Approved Provider status (on Provider website and/or brochure), including the logo and Provider approval statement, prior to registration. Providers must provide each learner who completes an activity a certificate, transcript, or letter of completion in addition to, not in lieu of, permanent records. Approved Providers may also display the AOTA CEU logo on promotional materials and certificates.

5. DISCLOSURE

Criteria: The Provider discloses in advance of the activity the Provider's and any instructor's financial and non-financial interest in any product, instrument, device, service, or material discussed during the activity and the source of any compensation related to the presentation (if indicated).

Guidelines: Individuals who participate in a continuing education activity have the right to know of any financial and non-financial interest the Provider or an instructor may have in a product or service mentioned during an activity. This information must be made available to the learners prior to the activity and may be conveyed through promotional materials, written handout, or an announcement prior to the commencement of the training. Not all programs require disclosure statements, only those in which there are a financial interest.

The purpose of this policy is to allow the participants to form their own judgments about the program prior to the presentation with full disclosure of the facts. Having an interest in or affiliation with any corporate organization does not prevent an instructor from making a presentation, but the relationship must be made known in advance. AOTA does not view the existence of these interests or commitments as implying bias or decreasing the value of participation of CE activities.

Examples of situations requiring financial disclosure might include service as a paid or non-paid consultant or employee; receiving support from commercial sources for honoraria, travel, and lodging; receipt of financial support from commercial sources for research projects; major financial interests or stock holdings; and/or membership in a commercial supporters speakers bureau.

Examples of situations requiring non-financial disclosure might include personal or professional relationships that might present a bias. All providers must have a written policy on disclosure. If a disclosure policy is not currently in place, one must be developed and submitted prior to approval.

A method of meeting the minimum requirements for disclosure (Criterion #5), copyright (Criterion #6), and professional conduct (Criterion #8) is to include the following in the speaker/instructor agreement:

Sample Speaker/Instructor Agreement Provisions

•Instructor will inform our organization and disclose any financial or non-financial interest in any product, instrument, device, service, or material discussed during their presentation and the source of any compensation prior to the start of his or her presentation.

•Instructor is compliant with copyright laws and has ownership or permission to use all materials used in conjunction with the presentation.

•Instructor will demonstrate high standards of professional conduct and not discriminate against learners on the basis of gender, age, socioeconomic or ethnic background, sexual orientation, or disability.

6. COPYRIGHT, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, & RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Criteria: The Provider has ownership or permission to use all materials used in conjunction with continuing education activities offered by the Provider. The Provider follows guidelines established by the Copyright Clearinghouse Center.

Guideline: AOTA respects the ownership of materials by those who have developed them. The Provider must be able to demonstrate ownership of all materials used in conjunction with an activity or provide documentation of permission to use copyrighted works. The Provider must also be able to provide release of information forms/documentation when using materials that depict patients or clients and others not employed by the Provider in any type of visual medium.

Although each of the following components may not be indicated for your organization, a comprehensive copyright, intellectual property rights, and release of information policy and procedure might include the following information:

- Copyright policy
- Policy definitions
- Scope of copyright protection
- Disclosure and ownership of copyrightable works
- Copyright in specific works
- Copying of works owned by others
- Determination of ownership and policy interpretation
- Licensing and income sharing
- Use of name in copyright notices
- Trade and service marks
- Patents
- Proprietary information
- Assurance that presenters use copyrighted materials by giving credit and with permission

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, & EVALUATION

7. NEEDS IDENTIFICATION

Criteria: Program development and learning activities are planned in response to identified needs relevant to the practice of occupational therapy. The Provider defines the potential learners/target audience, educational level, and any prerequisites for each continuing education activity and includes this information in promotional efforts.

Guidelines: The process of needs assessment should identify who is affected by the need—that is, whom the potential learner should be. A separate needs assessment is not required for each continuing education activity; however, the rationale and planning for each activity should be the result of needs that have been identified and documented by some assessment method(s). Needs assessments should be documented, reviewed, and updated.

Examples of methods for needs assessment include focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, learners' comments and suggestions, records and reports, tests or self-assessments, literature review, demographic data, print media, observation, and work samples. In work settings, needs assessment may be done in a variety of ways: at staff meetings and recorded in minutes, by utilization review committees, by discipline (such as occupational therapy), or by program (such as stroke or spinal cord injury program). The focus for this application is on identifying education needs for occupational therapy.

Educational levels are categorized as one of the following:

- Introductory—Information is geared to practitioners with little or no knowledge of the subject matter. Focus is on providing general introductory information.
- Intermediate—Information is geared to practitioners with a general working knowledge of current practice trends and literature related to the subject matter. Focus is on increasing understanding and competent application of the subject matter.
- Advanced—Information is geared to practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter based on current theories and standards of practice as well as current literature and research. Focus is on recent advances and trends, and/or research applications.

The following resources may be helpful:

- Grant, J. (2002). Learning needs assessment: assessing the need. *British Medical Journal, 324*, 156–159. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC64520/

- McCawley, P. (2009, August). *Methods for conducting an educational needs assessment*. Retrieved from http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/BUL/BUL0870.pdf

- Gupta, K., Sleezer, C, & Russ-Eff, D. (2007). *A practical guide to needs assessment* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons. A preview of this book is available at http://books.google.com/books?id=aWZKD_IiBtoC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

8. PROGRAM PLANNING & INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

Criteria: Qualified personnel are involved in planning and conducting each learning activity. The established content for each activity is relevant to occupational therapy and can be reflected in the "AOTA Classification Codes for Continuing Education Activities."

Guidelines:
Decisions about activity planning, development, and implementation are made by individuals who:

- Are competent in the subject matter

- Understand the activity purpose and learning outcomes
- Have knowledge and skill in the instructional methods and learning processes being used
- Have knowledge and skill in the delivery format (e.g., workshop, online course, self-study) being used

Qualifications and credentials of personnel involved in planning, development, and implementation of CE must be evident in documentation maintained by the provider, such as resumes, job descriptions, licenses, and certifications.

The established content for each continuing education activity is relevant and meaningful to occupational therapy. It is a joint responsibility of the Provider, the planner(s), and the instructor(s) to ensure that the learning experience is relevant to occupational therapy, meets the stated objectives, and results in achievement of the learning outcomes. The CE Administrator or CE Coordinator has oversight responsibilities for each activity.

The applicant must identify a system that is used to ensure that appropriate AOTA Classification Codes are assigned for each individual course as it is developed. An occupational therapy staff member in the position of AOTA CE Administrator or CE Coordinator or an OT consultant (inside or outside the organization) must be involved in this process. Each CE activity, including the AOTA Classification Codes, must be entered by the provider on their AOTA provider login page at least 2 weeks prior to the course start date. Classification Codes should also appear in course promotional materials; If courses are not open to the public, they MUST appear in promotional materials.

The AOTA Classification Codes are a method to identify how the learning activity is relevant to OT, but this alone is not sufficient. The responsibilities outlined in the OT Consultant agreement provide additional guidance in how to ensure that CE activities are relevant to OT learner needs (see Role of OT Consultant agreement in criterion 2.)

9. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Criteria: The Provider has clear, specific, and measurable written statements of intended learning outcomes for each continuing education activity that are based on identified needs and communicated to learners prior to registration.

Guidelines: Learning outcomes, also referred to as participant behavioral or performance-centered objectives, are written statements that:

- Provide a framework for activity planning
- Provide the basis for selecting content and instructional strategies
- Are participant centered (e.g., “By the end of this program, learners will …”) and describe to learners exactly what knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes they are expected to accomplish/demonstrate as a result of the learning activity
- Must relate back to the content areas and be relevant to OT practice
- Are the basis for providing periodic feedback, measuring progress, and doing a final assessment of learning
- Are realistic and appropriate in number for the planned activity (e.g., for conferences and multi-topic events/activities learning outcomes must be developed for each session)

Learning outcomes should be written in a way that reflects the instructional format and delivery method being used for a particular activity. For example, if learning outcomes are to be measured by a multiple choice exam, it would be inappropriate for the learning outcome to state that learners should be able to “analyze,” “discuss,” or “develop” anything because these cannot be measured by this method. More appropriate outcomes will require learners to “list,” “identify,” “differentiate,” or “recognize,” for example.

Likewise, it would be inappropriate to state that learners will be able to do or complete an activity (e.g., make a particular device, write a treatment plan, develop a program) as part of the learning outcome unless the expected outcome will actually be performed and measured during the course of the activity or through some follow-up method.

Resources can be found on the Web related to developing appropriate learning outcomes, including Bloom's Taxonomy or resources based on it. The following classic book may also be helpful:

- *Preparing Instructional Objectives: A Critical Tool in the Development of Effective Instruction* (3rd ed.) by Robert F. Mager, 1997. Atlanta, GA: The Center for Effective Performance.

10. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Criteria: Assessment procedures established during the planning of each activity are used to determine whether the learning outcomes have been achieved and are consistent with each activity's instructional format and delivery method.

Guidelines: Assessment of learning outcomes refers to the specific process through which learners demonstrate the attainment of learning outcomes. In every activity for which AOTA CEUs are awarded, the Provider has the obligation to require learners to demonstrate that they have attained the learning outcomes.

How learners will demonstrate their attainment of the outcomes should be an integral part of the activity planning and include determination of the assessment procedure, its timing, and application. Learners should be advised in advance of registration what will be required of them.

In an activity in which individual proficiency is a goal, demonstration by each individual should be required. The assignment of individual scores would be appropriate. A pass/fail designation would also be appropriate. In an activity where individual proficiency is not a specific goal, group demonstrations (e.g., group activities, discussion) may be appropriate.

11. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Criteria: Instructional methods are congruent with the identified learning outcomes of each activity and are appropriate for the selected delivery format.

Guidelines: Instructional methods (e.g., lecture, group discussion, lab, case study) should appeal to the diverse learning styles of each audience. The delivery format (e.g., workshop, online course, self-study) should be appropriate for the given content and support the identified learning outcomes.

12. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Criteria: Learning facilities, resource or reference materials, and instructional aids and equipment are consistent with the purpose, design, and intended learning outcomes of the learning activity. The learning environment will accommodate teaching strategies for and the environmental comfort of the learner, as well as the accessibility needs of learners with disabilities.

Guidelines: The Provider ensures an instructional environment that enhances the learning process. Resource or reference materials and instructional aids and equipment are current, appropriate for the learning activity, and support the intended learning outcomes. The Provider attempts to create a fully accessible educational environment from which all learners can benefit and

provides an opportunity for learners to identify special needs in advance of the activity.

A continuing education activity that is fully accessible addresses the needs not only of people with physical impairments, but also those with sensory impairments (i.e., hearing, speech, vision), and emotional and learning disabilities. This includes accessibility to technology and ADA compliance for distance learning.

13. POST EVALUATION

Criteria: Each learning activity is evaluated.

Guidelines: Activity evaluation is a measurement of the quality or determination of the worth of the activity as a whole. In planning for an activity, the Provider ensures that an evaluation processes is established to examine various aspects of the activity, including but not limited to:

- Needs assessment
- Instructional planning and execution
- Selecting and preparing instructors
- Program implementation
- The extent to which learning outcomes were addressed and achieved

Using only learner-reaction surveys (i.e., end-of-course evaluations that are not clearly based on the learning outcomes) will not yield the data needed for an adequate evaluation of learning experiences. Any surveys utilized as part of the activity evaluation should be designed to capture specific information that will allow the Provider to make continuous improvement in its offerings.

A “Summary Evaluation” is a compilation of the data collected at the end of a learning activity to determine its effectiveness and worth. Evaluations involve quantifying the value and quality of a learning activity. A list of attendee’s comments without other information is not a summary evaluation.

Written forms are the most commonly used method of course evaluation. CE evaluations should be an integral part of program planning, not an afterthought. We recommend requiring that all participants in your learning activities turn in their post-evaluations in order to receive their certificates; this would ensure that you receive maximum post-evaluation feedback.

CE evaluations should include:

- Demographic data about the learner, including profession, so that needs can be identified by profession
- Questions related to attainment of learning objectives/outcomes
- An opportunity to evaluate the faculty
- An opportunity to evaluate the resources provided
- An opportunity to evaluate the learning environment
- Future programming needs
- How the learner intends to use the knowledge and skills gained

The following books may be helpful:

- *How to Measure Training Results: A Practical Guide to Tracking the Six Key Indicators,* by Jack Phillips and Ron Stone, 2002. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels* (3rd ed.), by Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick, 2006. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.