
Occupational Therapy's Commitment to Nondiscrimination and Inclusion

The occupational therapy profession affirms the right of every individual to access and fully participate in society. This paper states the profession's stance on nondiscrimination and inclusion.

Nondiscrimination exists when we accept and treat all people equally. In doing so, we avoid differentiating between people because of biases or prejudices. The principle of equality as defined and supported in the core values of occupational therapy requires that "all individuals be perceived as having the same fundamental human rights and opportunities" (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 1993, p. 1085). We value individuals and respect their culture, ethnicity, race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and capacities, consistent with the principles defined and described in the *Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics* (AOTA, 2005). Nondiscrimination is a necessary prerequisite for inclusion. *Inclusion* requires that we ensure not only that everyone is treated fairly and equitably but also that all individuals have the same opportunities to participate in the naturally occurring activities of society, such as attending social events, having access to public transportation, and participating in professional organizations. We also believe that when we do not discriminate against others and when we include all members of society in our daily lives, we reap the benefits of being with individuals who have different perspectives, opinions, and talents from our own.

We support nondiscrimination and inclusion throughout our profession. Our concerns are twofold—for the persons who receive occupational therapy services and for our professional colleagues. In professional practice, our evaluations and interventions are designed to facilitate our clients' engagement in occupations to support their health and participation in the various contexts and environments of their lives. This includes, but is not limited to, the individuals' cultural, personal, temporal, virtual, physical, and social contexts as described in the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* (AOTA, 2008). As occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants, we assume a collaborative partnership with clients and their significant others to support the individual's right to self-direction.

We believe that inclusion is achieved through the combined efforts of clients, their families, and significant others; health, education, and social services professionals; legislators; community members; and others. We support all individuals and their significant others' rights to fully participate in making decisions that concern their daily occupations: activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, rest and sleep, work, education, play, leisure, and social participation.

AOTA and its members recognize the legal mandates concerning nondiscriminatory practices. However, the concept of nondiscrimination is not limited to that which is dictated by law. This professional association, through its members, boards, commissions, committees, officers, and staff, supports the belief that all members of the occupational therapy professional community are entitled to maximum opportunities to develop and use their abilities. These individuals also have the right to achieve productive and satisfying professional and personal lives.

We are committed to nondiscrimination and inclusion as an affirmation of our belief that the interests of all members of the profession are best served when the inherent worth of every individual is recognized and valued. We maintain that society has an obligation to provide the reasonable accommodations neces-

sary to allow individuals access to social, educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities. By embracing the concepts of nondiscrimination and inclusion, we will all benefit from the opportunities afforded in a diverse society.

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Note: This document replaces the 1995 Position Paper *Occupational Therapy: A Profession in Support of Full Inclusion*, the accompanying 1996 White Paper *The Role of the Occupational Therapy Practitioner in the Implementation of Full Inclusion*, and the 1999 and 2004 Position Paper *Occupational Therapy's Commitment to Nondiscrimination and Inclusion*.

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