

Position Statement

Occupational Therapy Scope of Practice

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to

- A. Define the scope of practice in occupational therapy by
 1. Delineating the domain of occupational therapy practice and services provided by occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants,
 2. Delineating the dynamic process of occupational therapy evaluation and intervention services used to achieve outcomes that support the participation of clients¹ in everyday life occupations and
 3. Describing the education and certification requirements needed to practice as an occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant;
- B. Provide a model definition of occupational therapy to promote uniform standards and professional mobility across state occupational therapy statutes and regulations; and
- C. Inform consumers, health care providers, educators, the community, funding agencies, payers, referral sources, and policymakers regarding the scope of occupational therapy.

Introduction

The occupational therapy scope of practice is based on the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) documents *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process* (4th ed.; AOTA, 2020c) and the *Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy* (AOTA, 2017), which states that “the use of occupation to promote individual, family, community, and population health is the core of occupational therapy practice, education, research, and advocacy” (p. 1). Occupational therapy is a dynamic and evolving profession that is responsive to consumer and societal needs, to system changes, and to emerging knowledge and research.

Although this document may be a resource to use with state statutes and regulations that govern the practice of occupational therapy, it does not supersede existing laws and other regulatory requirements. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are required to abide by relevant statutes and regulations when providing occupational therapy services. State statutes and other regulatory requirements typically include statements about educational requirements, be eligible for licensure as an occupational therapy practitioner, procedures to practice occupational therapy legally within the defined area of jurisdiction, the definition and scope of occupational therapy practice, and supervision requirements for occupational therapy assistants.

It is the position of AOTA that a referral is not required for the provision of occupational therapy services; however, laws and payment policies generally affect referrals for such services.

¹The clients of occupational therapy are typically classified as persons (including those involved in care of a client), groups (collections of individuals having shared characteristics or a common or shared purpose; e.g., family members, workers, students, people with similar interests or occupational challenges), and populations (aggregates of people with common attributes such as contexts, characteristics, or concerns, including health risks; Scaffa & Reitz, 2014, in AOTA, 2020c).

