
Home Health Occupational Therapy: Decision Guide for COVID-19

In the rapidly changing health care landscape, the ability to evaluate, plan, and adapt is vital; occupational therapy practitioners have unique skills to address this challenge.

- The following checklist can assist in the development of an agency-specific algorithm and work plan during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Occupational therapy practitioners and rehabilitation managers should work closely with agency management and the infection control department to develop a plan and maintain continuous monitoring to address emerging factors and guidelines.

Staffing Considerations

- Implement measures to support remote work for complete or partial shifts in order to minimize the risk of exposure
 - Consider client-related tasks that can be completed at home (e.g., telehealth visits, documentation, development of client and staff educational materials, caregiver training)
 - Consider equipment or systems that need to be in place to support remote work (e.g., access to telehealth platform, web conferencing)
 - Determine the viability of telehealth and e-visit services with AOTA's telehealth resources
- Implement support measures to prevent staff burnout
 - Adjust schedules, allow time off, and promote social supports
 - Share external support resources (e.g., employee assistance program, mindfulness/relaxation app support)

Patient Care Considerations

- Establish a system for implementing care for PUI, COVID-positive, and COVID-negative patients, including clinical decision-making guidelines about the necessity of care
 - Develop a screening process for determining if there is an urgent need for therapy
 - Develop guidelines for determining if telehealth is appropriate
- As part of the occupational profile, inquire specifically about client's access to groceries and prescription medications, changes in caregiver support, social support, and ability to interact with others outside the home via technology
 - Consider changes in routine that may potentiate occupational deprivation or social isolation
 - Screen for depression and anxiety

Staying Safe (Personal and Patient Safety)

- Utilize methods of remote service provision when appropriate

Note: CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CMS = Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; ICU = intensive care unit; OSHA = Occupational Safety and Health Administration; PPE = personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns, face shields); PUI = persons under investigation (status unknown for COVID +/-)

- Develop agency protocol to ensure patient confidentiality and compliance with regulations, if new services such as e-visits and telehealth are being provided
- Implement a pre-visit screening strategy including:
 - Call clients prior to visit to inquire about symptoms, contact with others who have had symptoms, travel, and to determine whether client is comfortable accepting a home health visit
- Implement strict home visit infection control precautions, such as:
 - Take only necessary medical supplies and equipment that can be adequately sanitized (e.g., stethoscope) into the home, and complete necessary client-related tasks outside the home if possible (e.g., documentation)
 - Inquire ahead of visit if client has personal equipment such as blood pressure cuff, adaptive equipment, etc. and use if possible
 - Adhere to handwashing and sanitizing best practices
 - Carry pre-packed PPE kits in sealable bags; when leaving a visit, seal all used PPE in the bag
 - Clean all equipment (and any personal items such as a phone) outside the home and prior to leaving
 - If seeing a client in their home, minimize contact with others in the home
 - Complete caregiver education remotely, or teach/observe teach-back with adequate physical distance and PPE
- Provide staff education on mechanism of transmission, clinical scenarios with highest potential for exposure, and best practices for preventing transmission
- Standardize use of PPE and infection control procedures, as indicated in the guidelines for CMS, CDC, and facility infection control department
 - Utilize the [OSHA standards](#), [strategies to optimize the supply of PPE](#), and [control and prevention guidance](#)
 - Implement a staff competency measure for correctly donning/doffing PPE
- Develop a system to regularly update staff on the latest guidelines for [health care professionals](#) and [home care](#)

Ethical Considerations

- Utilize AOTA's Code of Ethics when considering:
 - Agency policies and procedures relating to provision of occupational therapy
 - Clinical decision-making